

DREAMS, MEDICINE,
AND LITERARY PRACTICE

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

CURSOR MUNDI

*Cursor Mundi is produced under the auspices of the Center for
Medieval and Renaissance Studies, University of California, Los Angeles.*

Executive Editor

Blair Sullivan, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Editorial Board

Michael D. Bailey, *Iowa State University*

Christopher Baswell, *Columbia University and Barnard College*

Florin Curta, *University of Florida*

Elizabeth Freeman, *University of Tasmania*

Yitzhak Hen, *Ben-Gurion University of the Negev*

Lauren Kassell, *Pembroke College, Cambridge*

David Lines, *University of Warwick*

Cary Nederman, *Texas A&M University*

Teofilo Ruiz, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the back of the book.

DREAMS, MEDICINE,
AND LITERARY PRACTICE

Exploring the Western Literary Tradition
Through Chaucer

by

Tanya S. Lenz



BREPOLS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Lenz, Tanya S., author.

Dreams, medicine, and literary practice : exploring the Western literary tradition through Chaucer. -- (Cursor mundi ; 18)

1. Chaucer, Geoffrey, -1400--Criticism and interpretation.
2. Dreams in literature.
3. Medicine in literature.
4. Healing in literature.
5. Literature and medicine.
6. Poetry--Psychological aspects.

I. Title

II. Series

821.1-dc23

ISBN-13: 9782503534817

© 2014, Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

D/2014/0095/34

ISBN: 978-2-503-53481-7

Printed on acid-free paper

CONTENTS

Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction: Dreams and Medicine in Western Antiquity and the Middle Ages	1
Chapter 1. Chaucer, Literary Asclepian: Late Antique Dream Theory and the <i>Book of the Duchess</i>	21
Chapter 2. ‘God turne us every drem to goode!’ Dreams, Transformation, and Medicine in the <i>House of Fame</i>	51
Chapter 3. ‘The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne’: The <i>Parliament of Fowls</i>	73
Chapter 4. Literary <i>Lechecraft</i> : Contagion and Cure in <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>	101
Chapter 5. ‘Thy litel wit aslepe’: The Prologue to the <i>Legend of Good Women</i>	131
Chapter 6. Ravishing the Dream: The Nun’s Priest’s Tale	155
Afterword	183
Bibliography	187
Index	205

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1, p. 3. 'Asclepius', the Greek god of medicine, marble statue, St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum. First or second century.

Figure 2, p. 175. 'Zodiac Man', showing the body region associated with each zodiac sign, Cambridge, St John's College Library, MS K.26 fol. 41^v. Fourteenth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book, as with most undertakings, is the fruit of a thousand labors performed by as many hands. For his steadfast guidance and support, from beginning to end, I extend my deepest gratitude to John C. Coldewey. I would also like to thank Paul G. Remley and Míceál Vaughan. At one fragile point, the writing of this work was supported by the Susanna J. McMurphy Dissertation Fellowship, and I am indebted to those who established the fellowship as well as those who awarded it to me. I am sincerely grateful to Blair Sullivan and the *Cursor Mundi* board for seeing value in my work and staying with me through the revisions; to Simon Forde, Christophe Lebbe, and Guy Carney for receiving the manuscript; to the reviewers who were generous with their time and comments; and to all those at Brepols who have answered countless queries and offered patient assistance. To the excellent keepers and finders of books at the University of Washington's Suzzallo and Allen libraries: I am continually amazed by the consistently superior service you provide. For assistance with images, many thanks to Kathryn McKee at St John's Cross College, Cambridge as well as The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Finally, this work would not have been possible without the enduring support of my parents, Terry and Kathy Lenz, and of all those who have remained nameless — you know who you are.

INTRODUCTION: DREAMS AND MEDICINE IN WESTERN ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

The dream follows the interpretation.

— The Talmud

Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,
Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.

— Chaucer, General Prologue of the
Canterbury Tales (ll. 429–34)¹

One of the essential ideas of this book is that literary practice and dreams maintain the potential to bring about both beneficial and detrimental effects. While this idea, at its core, is a perennial one, the works of medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer are the focus of the present exploration. To provide relevant context for this exploration, the Introduction maps trends in historical understandings of dreams and medicine in western antiquity and the Middle Ages. By uncovering what likely informed Chaucer's genius, we rediscover the rich inheritance that was his and is ours through him. Although portions of this inheritance have been lost or forgotten over the course of intervening centuries, they may be reclaimed if we are but willing to acknowledge and receive them. This book is intended to facilitate such reclamation.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent references to Chaucer's works are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson.

Guided by the works themselves, my approach is fundamentally interdisciplinary and follows the three threads of literary practice, dreams, and medicine as they are woven together in rich and diverse ways within the tapestries of the poems. Rather than imposing a single method of analysis, my primary goal is to trace the interplay between and among these threads as it is uniquely expressed in each poem. Literary practice may appear as speech, written letters, authorship, or hermeneutics; dreams are waking visions or mental images experienced during sleep that may or may not come true; and medicine indicates any number of remedies or the practice of treating illness itself. Further, Chaucer's poetry often employs medical prose, medical motifs, and a kind of metaphorical medicine as a means of commenting on, among other subjects, dreams and literary practice. As Carol Falvo Heffernan remarks, 'a poet such as Chaucer and the best trained, most insightful physicians of an earlier age could see some of the same aspects of the human psyche and capture them in the distinctive languages of narrative poetry and medical prose.'² Following the lead of the works themselves, I allow for various associative meanings of such terms as 'disease', 'illness', 'sickness', 'harm', 'wound', 'cure', and 'heal' in the process of tracing how medicine and medical ideas are poetically leveraged in the texts. During the fourteenth century, for example, 'disease' can mean 'an absence of ease; uneasiness, discomfort; inconvenience, annoyance; disquiet, disturbance; trouble' or 'a condition of the body, or of some part or organ of the body, in which its functions are disturbed or deranged'.³

Intersections of Dreams and Medicine in Western Antiquity

Dreams and medicine share a deep connection that transcends boundaries of time and culture. In the West, this connection is well preserved in the figure of Asclepius, mentioned in Homer's *Iliad* as a healer whose sons were at the siege of Troy. Archaeologists have unearthed evidence that date Asclepius's actual activities as a physician to eighth century BC Greece,⁴ at which time dreams were part of religious healing in a process called incubation, or ritual tem-

² Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*, p. 90.

³ See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *disease*, *n*.

⁴ Hart, *Asclepius, the God of Medicine*, p. 16. Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, pp. 1–138, provide an extended look at Asclepius as both hero and god. See also the section on Grecian gods in Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, pp. 201–369, and also see King, *Greek and Roman Medicine*.

Figure 1. 'Asclepius', the Greek god of medicine, marble statue, St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum. First or second century. Reproduced with the permission of The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum.

ple sleep. During incubation, Asclepius was believed to visit patients in their dreams, either to issue cures and prescriptions or to perform surgery. If not visited by Asclepius, a patient would report any dreams to a priest who would then interpret them.⁵ Early Christianity assimilated this temple medicine, transferring the location to churches and substituting Asclepian cures with saintly miracles.⁶

Asclepius is among the three founding fathers of medicine, together with Apollo and Hippocrates, as recorded in *De medicina* by Isidore of Seville, the sixth-century Spanish cleric and encyclopaedist. The lineage begins with Apollo, who was the Greek god not only of medicine but also of poetry and prophecy. Apollo is identified as the father of Asclepius, who is in turn the father of Hippocrates:



⁵ For more general information on Greek dream interpretation, see van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams* and Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*.

⁶ See a useful overview of this process in Hamilton, *Incubation*. For more on medicine and faith in the Christian context of Medieval England, see Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 59–82.

Among the Greeks, Apollo is considered the author and discoverer of the art of medicine. His son Aesculapius expanded the art, whether in esteem or in effectiveness, but after Aesculapius was killed by a bolt of lightning, the study of healing was declared forbidden, and the art died along with its author, and was hidden for almost fifty years, until the time of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians. Then Hippocrates, a descendant of Asclepius (i.e. Aesculapius) born on the island of Cos, brought it to light again.⁷

This lineage of physicians served at least two purposes. First, it bridged the mythic and divine realm of Apollo with the proto-scientific realm of Hippocrates through Asclepius, who served both as god figure and actual physician. Second, it shifted the framework of medicine from Apollo's realms of poetry and prophecy to the Asclepian domain of dreams and temple incubation, and finally to the more rational and less religious context of Hippocrates. Most importantly, the lineage reveals early associations among religion, poetry, dreams, and medicine.

The ancient version of the Hippocratic Oath records a similar physician ancestry and begins, 'I swear by Apollo the healer, by Aesculapius, by Health, and all the powers of healing, and call to witness all the gods and goddesses that I may keep this Oath and Promise to the best of my ability and judgement.'⁸ The Greco-Roman medical tradition, then, can be traced to Apollo and the province of religion, poetry, and prophecy. Asclepius, as both mortal physician and god figure, bridged sacred and secular medicine. Dreams were his primary healing media.

The dream journals of Greek orator Publius Aelius Aristides Theodorus (c. AD 118–c. 180) provide more detailed insight into the healing powers ascribed to Asclepian dreams. Born in Mysia (what is today Turkey), Aristides fell ill when he was in his mid-twenties. While traveling, his health worsened considerably, and he was visited by Asclepius in a dream. The god instructed him to walk barefoot and to begin recording his dreams. Aristides thus began compiling what is now known as the *Sacred Tales*,⁹ a work that records some

⁷ 'Medicinae autem artis auctor ac repertor apud Graecos perhibetur Apollo. Hanc filius eius Aesculapius laude vel opere ampliavit. Sed postquam fulminis ictu Aesculapius interiit, interdicta fertur medendi cura; et ars simul cum auctore defecit, latuitque per annos pene quingentos usque ad tempus Artaxerxis regis Persarum. Tunc eam revocavit in lucem Hippocrates Asclepio patre genitus in insula Cos.' The Latin text is from Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, IV. 3. The translation is from Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 157. See also Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, p. 109.

⁸ Hippocrates, *Writings*, trans. by Chadwick and Mann, p. 67.

⁹ Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, p. 171.

130 of his dreams and associated life circumstances including a range of illnesses he endured such as tertian fever and seizures. Many of the dreams Aristides records reference Asclepius or contain prescriptive instructions. Regarding a dream dated January, AD 166 Aristides writes: '*I dreamed that I was at the entrance of the Temple of Asclepius, and a certain one of my friends met me, embraced me, and greeted me warmly, since he had not seen me for a long time.*'¹⁰ In August of 148, he writes:

I had the following dream, either when I had now begun the practice of vomiting at evening, or the vomiting had not yet taken place. *On arising from bed, I had to eat nuts, dried figs, date nut, and some bread in addition to these things.* Afterwards I used these things beside the ointment.¹¹

In some of Aristides' dreams, gods and goddesses other than Asclepius appear; others contain prophetic information or direct him to undertake journeys or write certain materials. One summoned him to the temple of Pergamum, where he spent two years as an incubant.¹² Although initially a polytheist, Aristides gradually began to place increasing faith in Asclepius alone as a result of his experiences.

With Hippocrates, medicine shifted more definitively from a religious context to a proto-scientific one, and while dreams continued to play an important role in Hippocratic medicine, they served as diagnostic indicators rather than direct healing agents. This shift in the role of dreams is consistent with broader changes Hippocrates brought to the practice of medicine. Beginning in the sixteenth century in western Europe, the figure of Hippocrates was recognized as the sole 'father of medicine', while Asclepius and Apollo's connection to medicine faded into the shadows of history.

Despite his title, we know relatively little about Hippocrates himself. Plato (c. 427–c. 347 BC) reports that he lived during the time of Socrates — the fifth century BC — and that he came from the island of Cos.¹³ Several ancient biographies state that Hippocrates belonged to the Greek guild of physicians called Asclepiadae.¹⁴ There are several views regarding the origin of this term. One view holds that the Asclepiadae were direct descendants of Asclepius, the

¹⁰ Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, p. 207.

¹¹ Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, p. 246.

¹² Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, pp. 25–26.

¹³ Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, p. 129.

¹⁴ *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, I, p. xlv; II, 335; and III, 93.

Greek god of medicine. According to a second view, they were simply his followers. A third possibility, that they were priest-physicians of Asclepian temples, has largely been discounted.¹⁵ Approximately seventy works are attributed to the name Hippocrates, though most were not likely written by the physician himself. These works were collected in various editions for the purpose of instructing students and practitioners of medicine prior to the advent of modern medical science in the nineteenth century. The Hippocratic medical corpus draws on a combination of religion and philosophy and addresses a wide range of subjects including prognosis, surgery, humours, regimens, epidemics, anatomy, aphorisms, ethics, and dreams.

The Hippocratic school of medicine emphasized a rational, empiric approach to diagnosing and treating illness, as opposed to the more ritualistic and religious approaches associated with Asclepius. During this period, and for centuries afterward, medicine was dominated by humoral theory, which dictated that the body was composed of four substances generally identified as blood, bile,¹⁶ black bile, and phlegm. Health results from the proper proportion of these substances while disease results from imbalances. The humours correspond respectively to the four basic properties of hot, cold, moist, and dry. Isidore of Seville explains further:

All diseases come from the four humors, that is, from blood, bile, black bile, and phlegm. [By these, healthy people are governed, and feeble people are stricken, for when they increase beyond their natural course they cause sickness.] Just as there are four elements, so there are four humors, and each humor resembles its element: blood resembles air, bile fire, black bile earth, and phlegm water.¹⁷

According to humoral theory, the body presents a microcosm of the universe and is not separate from mental, emotional, and spiritual matters. As such, it was believed that the soul entered the interior of the body during sleep, delivering messages about its condition through dream images.

The earliest extant Greek treatise on dreams is in fact a medical work. Part of the Hippocratic corpus, this piece dates to the end of the fifth century or beginning of the fourth century BC. The piece, *Regimen IV*, contains informa-

¹⁵ Hart, *Asclepius, the God of Medicine*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Sometimes called yellow bile. Early works on humoralism do not uniformly agree on what constitutes a humour, nor on their properties. Presentation of humours often varies with author. See Temkin, *Galenism*.

¹⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 109 (bracketed section present in edition).

tion on the effects of diet and exercise on overall health and opens with the following assertion: 'He who has learnt aright about the signs that come in sleep will find that they have an important influence upon all things.'¹⁸ The author then observes that the interpretation of dreams is difficult because there are at least two types: prophetic or divine, and diagnostic. Often, interpreters of prophetic dreams reach mistaken conclusions because they 'have no understanding of the physical etiology of dreams for medical diagnosis.'¹⁹ Here, the author not only suggests that dreams are valuable diagnostic tools but that their interpretation can be incorrect if this fact is not recognized. This treatise clearly shows that, in a Hippocratic medical context, dream interpretation is a recognized, and valuable, means of diagnosis.

Regimen IV more specifically asserts that dreams, when properly interpreted, can indicate the state of physical health.²⁰ The author identifies several types of dreams including those that are divine, or foretell future events, and those that merely repeat the actions or thoughts an individual has experienced during the day. The latter type of dream signifies health because the soul 'is overpowered neither by surfeit nor by depletion nor by any attack from without.'²¹ However, dreaming of struggle or victory indicates an imbalance in the physical body. The advised treatment varies but typically includes some combination of emetics, dietary changes, and exercise.

According to Hippocratic medicine, a correlation exists between ancient cosmology and the circulations of the human body. Based on the appearance of celestial objects in a dream, a physician may diagnose imbalances and prescribe a proper regimen to restore health. If a dreamer sees the sun, moon, heavens, and bright stars, for example, 'each in the proper order' — that is, each residing in its proper concentric sphere following ancient cosmological understanding — it is a sign of physical health; if, however, a dream suggests a disruption in this proper order, then physical illness is indicated. Health is further indicated by dreams of wearing white clothing, seeing and hearing clearly, walking and running with certainty, well-tilled earth, trees covered with fruit, and rivers flowing with pure water. Dreams that contain the opposite signs indicate some harm or imbalance in the body.²² For the physician who can interpret properly,

¹⁸ *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, IV, 421.

¹⁹ Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, p. 131.

²⁰ See *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, IV, 421–47.

²¹ *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, IV, 425.

²² *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, IV, 437.

each element of a dream points to a specific disease and the corresponding regimen. A dream of rough earth denotes impure flesh and requires longer walks as a remedy, for example. To see impure streams in a dream signifies impurities in the bowels, remedied by running and walking. In this way, the author of *Regimen IV* explains the medical significance of dream images and how they can be used to diagnose disease and restore health.

Aristotle (384–322 BC) wrote three short treatises on the subject of dreams entitled *De somno et vigilia* (*On Sleep and Waking*), *De insomniis* (*On Dreams*) and *De divinatione per somnum* (*On Divination through Sleep*). Found in the *Parva naturalia*, these treatises provide the first systematic treatment of sleep and dreams in Greek literature.²³ In them, Aristotle scientifically investigates the psychological and physiological states that cause or accompany both sleep and dreams. As the son of Nicomachus, the court physician to the king of Macedon, Aristotle was perhaps predisposed to a scientific and medical perspective. He begins his investigation by asking a series of questions about sleep, waking, and dreams — what are they? Do they belong to the soul or to the body? Do sleepers always dream? He reasons that a dream is neither perception nor opinion; rather, ‘it is the mental picture which arises from the movement of sense-impressions when one is asleep.’²⁴ Aristotle concludes that the dream is ‘one form of mental image’ that occurs during sleep, though not every presentation occurring during sleep is a dream.

For Aristotle, sleep and dreams are part of the same phenomenon that arises from the state of the material body and its sense-organs.²⁵ He further believes sleep itself is an imperfect and even pathological state, comparing it to epilepsy and similar conditions.²⁶ From this perspective, it follows that dreams are an imperfect means of perceiving. In various writings, Aristotle refers to three oneiric functions: some dreams signify physical health, others indicate moral state, and a third category foretells future events.²⁷ Concerning the first group, Aristotle concedes that ‘some dreams are causes, while others are signs, for example, of what is happening in the body’. Yet this fact has little to do with the meaning or function of dreams for Aristotle; rather, it is an ‘accidental characteristic’ of some dreams due to the material conditions of sleep, body, and mind.²⁸

²³ Wijsenbeek-Wijler, *Aristotle's Concept of Soul, Sleep and Dreams*, p. 170.

²⁴ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. by Hett, p. 369.

²⁵ Wijsenbeek-Wijler, *Aristotle's Concept of Soul, Sleep and Dreams*, pp. 172 and 231.

²⁶ Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, p. 46.

²⁷ Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, p. 49.

²⁸ Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams*, p. 47.

On Divination through Sleep engages in a searching commentary on whether dreams are sent from God and whether they are significant or coincidental. Reasoning through these questions, Aristotle concludes that most dreams 'resemble coincidences' and they are not supernatural in origin.²⁹ He also suggests that dreams may provide an early indication of physical disease: 'Since the beginnings of all things are small, obviously the beginnings of diseases and other distempers, which are about to visit the body, must also be small. Clearly then these must be more evident in sleep than in the waking state.'³⁰ Further, he notes that 'even accomplished physicians say that close attention should be paid to dreams'.³¹ *On Divination through Sleep* concludes with a comment on dream interpretation; specifically, that one must have the ability to detect likenesses in order to skillfully judge dreams.

Aristotle approaches the subject of medical oneirology (the study of dreams to diagnose or cure illness) with more caution than many of his predecessors. He warns that not all dreams are significant in the same manner for all individuals. While Aristotle did believe that dreams can indicate the state of body, mind, and emotions, he also believed that all dreams, except the prophetic, can themselves be explained in naturalistic terms and derive mainly from the conditions of sleep. Aristotle's commentary on sleep and dreams influenced later thinkers and physicians, including Arabic physician Avicenna (also known as Ibn Sina; AD 980–1037). In many ways, he represents the apex of Greek philosophical thought on the subject of dreams. Medicine in ancient Greece was not considered an independent discipline, but rather a science subordinate to psychology. Aristotle and Avicenna were key figures for any student of medicine at least through the Middle Ages because Aristotle's *De anima* was the primary text for the study of psychology and Avicenna provided the principal commentary on it.³² Aristotle's scientific understanding of dreams constitutes one of the most significant contributions to the alteration of late medieval oneiric theory.

Greek physicians of secular medicine often considered a patient's dreams for the purposes of diagnosing physical and mental disease. Among the most prominent of these was Galen (AD 129–99), physician to Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius. Among many other influential medical works, he authored *Diagnosis from Dreams*. Dreams were a central part of Galen's personal and pro-

²⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. by Hett, p. 379.

³⁰ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. by Hett, p. 377.

³¹ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. by Hett, p. 377.

³² Talbot, 'Medicine', p. 401.

fessional life. When Galen was sixteen, his father Nikon experienced dreams that guided him to a physician with whom his son could study. When Galen became ill at the age of twenty, Asclepius appeared to him in a dream, directing him to open an artery between his thumb and first finger. Claiming that this treatment saved his life, Galen became a follower of Asclepius. When Galen was forty-three, Asclepius again appeared to him in a dream, urging him to complete a work on the optic nerve.³³ Finally, he was guided by dreams to practise a type of operation still in use today.³⁴ For Galen, these dreams were divine in origin. Other dreams were symptomatic, and a physician could interpret them to discover humoral imbalances within the body.

In *Diagnosis from Dreams* Galen further explains the concept of symptomatic dreams: 'if someone sees a conflagration in a dream, he is troubled with yellow bile. If he sees smoke or mist or deep darkness, he is troubled with black bile.'³⁵ Galen also asserts that some dream images trace to the thoughts and actions of daily life. The physician provides several examples of dream interpretation. According to one,

a certain wrestler dreamt that he was standing in a cistern of blood and was scarcely able to keep his head above the level of blood. We took this dream as an indication of excess blood in his body and recommended that he undergo bleeding.³⁶

Although Galen concludes that dream interpretation alone cannot provide a reliable means of diagnosis, he believes that the images ill people see in their dreams will often reveal the state of their bodily humours. Galen also allowed for divine healing through dreams in cases of extreme illness.

In the ancient world, dreams were of interest not just to medicine but to a variety of disciplines. Such interest is evident in the etymology of the Greek term *physis*, which originally signified 'nature'. Experts in natural knowledge became in the Latin tradition *physicus*, which could denote 'natural philosopher' or 'medicine man'. Eventually the term 'physician' arose.³⁷ Indeed, intellectual disciplines often overlapped and were not, by modern standards, well delineated during the antique and early medieval periods. Dreams were integral to many of

³³ Oberhelman, 'Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*', pp. 37–38 and Mattern, *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*, p. 3.

³⁴ Walde, 'Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age?', p. 121.

³⁵ Oberhelman, 'Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*', p. 43.

³⁶ Oberhelman, 'Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*', p. 45.

³⁷ This word is traced in French, *Medicine Before Science*, pp. 20–21.

these disciplines in various capacities: Avicenna was interested in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, physics, and poetry as well as medicine; in ancient Greece, Stoic and Epicurean schools of philosophy joined Aristotle in devising their own understanding of dreams; and examples of literary dreams are found in the works of Homer and Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.³⁸ In addition, the art of dream interpretation was comprehensively explored in the *Oneirocritica* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) compiled by Artemidorus Daldianus of Ephesus (second century AD).³⁹ Originally written in Greek, the *Oneirocritica* is one of the best known ancient dream-books. The text provides interpretations of common dream scenarios and symbols such as floods, weeping, teeth, flying, dice, and birth. Dreams and dream interpretation were also used in Greek magic to control the behaviour of individuals or to gain knowledge.⁴⁰

Various early Christian thinkers set forth their own classification systems, including Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, or Tertullian (c. AD 155–c. 222). Tertullian treats many aspects of dreams in *De anima* (*Of the Soul*). Dreams, he claims, result from the combination of ‘sleep giving rest to the body’ and ‘ecstasy depriving the soul of it’ (XLV. 2).⁴¹ Arguing that not all dreams can be false and ‘everybody will at least once in life have found that by a dream the future was disclosed to him’ (XLVI. 2), Tertullian provides a list of fourteen prophetic dreams experienced by such influential individuals as Cicero, Plato, and Sophocles. Tertullian identifies three classes of dreams and their origins: those that are ‘fallacious, confused, and impure’ are caused by demons; those ‘which edify us and reveal truth’ are sent from God; a third type of dream he calls ‘natural’ results from the activity of the soul during the ecstasy of sleep (XLVII. 1–3). Tertullian also explains how various factors — including time, position of the body, and consumption of food — influence the content of dreams. Among other observations, he notes that the clearest and truest dreams occur toward the end of the night and it is best to lie on the left side of the body to avoid putting pressure on the liver (XLVIII. 1–4). In a similar manner, early Christian writer Calcidius (fourth century AD) describes four types of dream experience in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*: ‘passional’ dreams, ‘rational’ dreams, revelatory dreams, and waking visions.⁴²

³⁸ For more on this topic, see Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*.

³⁹ See Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, trans. by White.

⁴⁰ Eitrem, ‘Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual’.

⁴¹ Tertullian, *De anima*, ed. by Waszink. Translation by Waszink.

⁴² Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 29.

Dreams, Medicine, and Medieval Europe

In medieval Europe dreams and medicine maintained some connection to one another yet simultaneously became increasingly distinct as means of perception and understanding. Dreams and dream theory were regarded in various ways and contexts from the Anglo-Saxon period through the late Middle Ages. In his definitive study *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, Steven Kruger groups dreams into several categories including the patristic dream, dreams from the fourth to the twelfth century, and the late medieval dream.⁴³ While the function and understanding of dreams is unique in each of these contexts, dreams were not infrequently viewed with ambivalence during the Middle Ages, sometimes believed and sometimes disbelieved.⁴⁴

Dream classification became increasingly important during the Middle Ages for a variety of reasons. Macrobius (end of the fourth to beginning of the fifth century AD), a premier dream theorist of the Middle Ages, provided one such system of classification. He used Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* as a platform on which to build his neo-Platonic encyclopaedic work entitled *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. His work likely reached England in the tenth or eleventh century and was a major source for the scholastic movement and medieval science. Primarily concerned with the prophetic potential of dreams, Macrobius identifies five main types of dreams: *somnium* (enigmatic dream), *visio* (prophetic vision), *oraculum* (oracular dream), *insomnium* (nightmare), and *visum* (apparition).⁴⁵ A *somnium* requires interpretation because meaning is concealed 'with strange shapes and veils'.⁴⁶ There are five subtypes of the *somnium*: personal (dreaming of oneself), alien (dreaming of someone else), social (dreaming of oneself and others), public (dreaming of a public place or enterprise), and universal (dreaming of celestial regions or bodies). The *visio* is a dream that comes true. The *oraculum* features an authority figure who reveals what will occur in the future and what action to take. The *insomnium* is caused by mental or physical stress or anxiety. Finally, the *visum* is experienced in the state between sleep and wakefulness. Macrobius dismisses the last two dream types (*insomnium* and *visum*) as 'not worth interpreting since they have no pro-

⁴³ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*.

⁴⁴ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, pp. 87–90.

⁴⁶ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, p. 90.

phetic significance'. Scipio's dream, according to Macrobius, can be classified as a *somnium*, *visio*, and all five types of *oraculum*.⁴⁷

Like Macrobius, the medieval church focused on dream classification, but for different reasons. On one hand, early church officials approached ambiguous dreams and various processes of divination with marked suspicion,⁴⁸ likely in part because they feared perceived evil influences and the erosion of their own authority as divine intercessors. Medieval dream-books such as the *Somniale Danielis* that dealt with divination through dreams gave medieval Christianity more direct reason for mistrust, as they 'implicitly deny the importance of any human influence on the future, and fail to make clear God's controlling role in the ordering of events'.⁴⁹ Simultaneously, however, church officials endorsed divinely conceived dreams. Indeed, biblical figures such as Joseph and Daniel clearly testify to the place dreams and dream divination occupy in the Christian milieu.

Waking visions and other types of visionary experiences were often reported by medieval saints and mystics such as Teresa of Avila, Angela of Foligno, John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and Hildegard of Bingen. Teresa of Avila's account of her vision of an angel with a golden spear inspired Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini's famous 1652 sculpture *Ecstasy of St Teresa*, for example, and Angela of Foligno tells about experiencing a vision of Christ's throat and arms: 'Through this beauty it seemed to me that I was seeing Christ's divinity, and that I was standing in the presence of God; but of that moment that is all I remember seeing'.⁵⁰ Certainly, it was difficult for the church to summarily discount these types of holy visions. In this way, Christianity both denied and embraced dreams and other types of visionary experiences during the Middle Ages.

It is not insignificant that Christianity and dreams appear together in early English literary tradition. The Old English poem *Cædmon's Hymn*, composed c. 675, is a divinely inspired dream. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) tells how Cædmon, the first English poet whose name is known to us, fell asleep and sang the poem in praise of God. The *Dream of the Rood* is another Old English Christian dream poem, sections of which are found on the Ruthwell Cross that dates to the eighth century. In the poem, the narrator speaks with the cross on which Christ was crucified. By

⁴⁷ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, pp. 90–91.

⁴⁸ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁹ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, trans. by Lachance, p. 146.

the late Middle Ages the dream vision was still a popular literary genre. Well-known examples include *Pearl*, the *Roman de la Rose*, William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*) in addition to Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.⁵¹ Many late medieval literary dream visions exploited what Kruger terms a 'double potential' to either educate and enlighten or return the dreamer to the somatic, psychological realms.⁵²

Beginning in the twelfth century, Europe witnessed a renewed interest in the physiology of dreaming largely due to translations of Greek and Arabic scientific texts that occurred throughout what has been termed the 'twelfth-century Renaissance' (c. AD 1050–1225).⁵³ Arabic physician and philosopher Avicenna, for example, includes brief mention of dreams in his influential medical encyclopedia *The Canon of Medicine*. Used in medical schools as late as the seventeenth century, the *Canon* presents dreams as one means of determining which humour is dominant in a patient. An 'equable temperament' is attended by 'agreeable dreams arousing hopefulness, with fragrant perfumes and alluring voices, visions and agreeable companionship'.⁵⁴ Dreams of fire, yellow flags, or a hot sun indicate that choler or yellow bile is dominant while dreams of water, rivers, snow, or rain indicate that phlegm is dominant.⁵⁵ Avicenna also presents the objective and subjective 'signs of plethora'. Objective signs include a red face, sluggish movements, and tight skin. Subjective signs include dreams of being unable to move or speak or of carrying heavy weight.⁵⁶

Greek, Roman, and Arabic tradition influenced medicine during the Middle Ages just as it influenced perceptions and understandings of dreams. As Nancy Siraisi explains, 'medicine's distinctive ideas and most important written sources of authoritative teaching did not originate in medieval Europe but were drawn from Greek antiquity and the world of Islam'.⁵⁷ As such, humoral theory and

⁵¹ Some critics include Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* as a fifth dream poem.

⁵² Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 124.

⁵³ For an excellent overview of translation during the twelfth century, see d'Alverny, 'Translations and Translators'. For a focused account of Greek and Arabic texts translated, see Lindberg, 'The Transmission of Greek and Arabic Learning in the West'. This latter volume also includes essays on medieval mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, motion, and magic.

⁵⁴ Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine*, trans. by Gruner, p. 274.

⁵⁵ Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine*, trans. by Gruner, p. 277.

⁵⁶ Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine*, trans. by Gruner, p. 276.

⁵⁷ Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 1.

associated methods of diagnosis (pulse-taking and urine analysis) and treatment (herbs, diet, exercise, blood-letting) became dominant practices, particularly in the early Middle Ages. Scientific inquiries into medicine that became more widely available to the Latin west beginning in the twelfth century included the Greek works of Hippocrates and Galen and the Arabic works of Rhazes (d. 925), Hali ibn-Abbas (tenth century), Avicenna, and Averroës (d. 1198).

Christian attitudes toward medicine varied widely in the early Middle Ages. Some people valued popular folk medicine, for example, while others placed their faith entirely in God. Early church fathers viewed themselves as spiritual physicians of a sort, 'following the example of the ultimate *medicus*, Christ, who is described as the Great Physician, the *verus medicus, solus medicus, verus archiater, ipse et medicus et medicamentum* — himself both the physician and the medication'.⁵⁸ Preserving the health of the community was of utmost importance to the church during a time when it fought against lingering pagan influences and heresy. From a Christian perspective, sickness was often associated with evil and a state of sin and so the distinction between soul and body was often not clear. Medieval handbooks of penance guided clerics in addressing types of sin and processes of penance. Healing at various times was achieved through prayer, anointing with oil, forgiveness, and miracles. Saints and their relics were also sought as means of healing. The hospitals that arose during the later Middle Ages were originally owned by the church and eventually transferred to the control of local governments.⁵⁹

The practice of lay medicine in the Middle Ages was significantly furthered by the formation of medical schools. The first medical school in western Europe was at Salerno, in southern Italy. It began in the ninth century and continued through the end of the fourteenth century, peaking in the twelfth century.⁶⁰ Instruction at the school drew from Greek, Latin, and Arabic writings. While medical schools formed at other locations in Europe including Montpellier, Bologna, and Paris, the study of medicine was not a priority at medieval English universities such as Oxford. Bologna in particular is associated with anatomical dissections which were practised there beginning in the early thirteenth century. These dissections were undertaken for the purpose of anatomy instruction and were often performed on the bodies of executed criminals.⁶¹ In addition to

⁵⁸ Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith*, p. 133.

⁵⁹ Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith*, pp. 184–98.

⁶⁰ Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*, p. 300.

⁶¹ Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*, pp. 340–41.

dissection, the practice of surgery became an increasingly developed and recognized craft beginning in the twelfth and continuing to the fifteenth century.⁶² Astrological forces were also considered when diagnosing and treating disease, following the view that the physical body is a microcosm of macrocosmic forces comprised of elements and celestial objects.⁶³

Medieval Europe experienced many devastating diseases and epidemics. Beginning in the mid-fourteenth century, the plague ravaged populations, revealing the inadequacy of many accepted modes of medical theory and practice and the need for new avenues of study, defence, and cure.⁶⁴ The disease was so swift that it often took its victims within days after the onset of symptoms. Leprosy, scurvy, and influenza also weakened populations considerably. Less directly threatening than these diseases, lovesickness, or *amor hereos*, is a malady that undeniably functions in ancient and medieval culture. Ancient literature and medicine, including the writings of Galen and the Bible, describe love experienced as illness.⁶⁵ Lovesickness is also found in medieval literary works; I explore its appearance in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in a later chapter.

Dreams, Medicine, and Chaucer

Chaucer was certainly familiar with the mythic connection between Apollo and Asclepius, likely through Ovid's account in the *Metamorphoses* of the Raven and the Crow. This story tells of jealous Apollo killing his unfaithful wife Coronis, who posthumously bears her son Asclepius. Though Chaucer omits the birth of Asclepius, the story is the ultimate source for the Manciple's Tale. Moreover, to a greater or lesser extent, Chaucer knew the list of physicians that appears in the General Prologue portrait of the pilgrim Doctour of Physik, which in turn testifies to his awareness of influential medical authors. He lists Greek physicians Asclepius, Dioscorides (AD 50–70), Rufus (25 BC–AD 50), Hippocrates, and Galen; Arabic physicians Hali ibn-Abbas, ibn-Serabi,⁶⁶ Rhazes, Avicenna, and

⁶² Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp. 160.

⁶³ Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England*, pp. 127–28.

⁶⁴ For further relevant information on medieval medicine and medical practice, see Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England*; Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England*; and Ussery, *Chaucer's Physician*.

⁶⁵ Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, pp. 5–7.

⁶⁶ Several possibilities exist for this reference, including Serapion of Alexandria (c. 200–150 BC), Serapion the Elder of Damascus (ninth century), or an Arab known as Serapion the Younger (twelfth century).

Averroës; early Christian physicians Johannes Damascenus (eighth century) and Constantinus Africanus (AD 1056–85); and contemporary physicians Bernard Gordon (AD 1283–1309), John of Gaddesden (d. c. AD 1349), and Gilbertus Anglicus (c. AD 1250). Among the possible sources through which many of these physicians and possibly their translated works were known to Chaucer are the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, who is twice mentioned in the Parson's Tale,⁶⁷ and the *Speculum doctrinale* of Vincent of Beauvais,⁶⁸ to which clear references are made in the Nun's Priest's Tale.⁶⁹ As Carol Falvo Heffernan argues, 'Chaucer's grasp of medieval medicine was technically sound with respect to melancholy, *amor hereos* and mania, seeming to suggest that he had direct knowledge of some medical texts.'⁷⁰

Moreover, judging from Chaucer's attention to physical concerns as well as the medical aspect of dream types and causes in such works as the *Canterbury Tales* and the *House of Fame*, he was well acquainted with the complex historical factors associating medicine and dreams. Yet for many of us the historical connection between dreams and medicine has been all but entirely erased by time, just as the interrelation of these topics has been largely overlooked in the poetry of Chaucer. Despite Chaucer's frequent literary use of medicine and medical motifs, there have been very few studies dealing with this topic. No previous work has specifically addressed the poetic intersection of medicine and dreams in Chaucer. The present study explores how Chaucer's poetry resurrects, problematizes, and transforms the intersection of dreams and medicine as represented by such figures as Apollo, Asclepius, Hippocrates, and Galen. More specifically, I suggest that Chaucer's poetry features the Apollonian association between medicine and poetry, the Asclepian association between medicine and dreams, and the Hippocratic and Galenic diagnostic use of dreams. Outside of

⁶⁷ The reference in Middle English is to 'Seynt Ysidre' at lines 89 and 551.

⁶⁸ The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* records Chaucer's knowledge of the *Speculum historiale*: 'What seyth also the epistle of Ovyde | Of trewe wyves and of here labour? | What Vincent in his Estorial Myrour?' (305–7). For more information on Chaucer's knowledge of Vincent of Beauvais, see Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer: His Life and Writings*, pp. 375–380; for more on Vincent of Beauvais himself, see Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, II, 457–76.

⁶⁹ Such references include verbal parallels. See Aiken, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Dame Pertelote's Knowledge of Medicine'. For more information on women in the medieval medical profession, see Hughes, *Women Healers in Medieval Life and Literature* and Gottfried, *Doctors and Medicine in Medieval England*.

⁷⁰ Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*, p. 89.

the intersection of dreams and medicine, Chaucer's works presents a variety of perspectives on dreams and medicine as distinct entities.

As the following pages show, the texts in this study provide a sort of laboratory in which a wide range of meanings and functions of dreams and medicine are presented and tested. Taken together, the texts provide no simple, definitive conclusions regarding dreams, medicine, or literary practice; however, one of the most consistent, recurring, significant, and enduring ideas offered is the double potential of literary endeavour and dreams to both harm and heal. Within the pages of the poems in this study we see how authors, texts, characters, readers, audiences, patrons, and dreams all maintain the power to bring about individual and social order, cohesion, union, harmony, and health or to inflict disorder, chaos, discord, dissonance, and disease. While many of the poems explore the latter possibility, they are more consistently characterized by the former. In short, this study follows how Chaucer's poetry shows that dreams and literary practice play an essential and vital role in establishing and maintaining individual and social well-being.

Dreams, Medicine, and Literary Practice: Exploring the Western Literary Tradition through Chaucer studies six of Chaucer's poems in their chronological order of composition, beginning with the dream-vision genre. The first chapter investigates how Chaucer's initial dream-vision poem, the *Book of the Duchess*, projects dreams as psychological and physiological phenomena rather than prophetic media. Specifically, the poem emphasizes the physical body, validates individual dreams, and leverages the dream as a tool of diagnosis and healing. This poem functions in part as a means of healing emotional and psychological wounds, a process ultimately rooted in effects connected to the Black Death and recurrent outbreaks of plague.⁷¹ The literary dream as a healing medium becomes significantly compromised in Chaucer's subsequent dream-vision poems, the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls*, to which the next two chapters are devoted. While both poems present the dream as a physiological experience, it is no longer simply a vehicle of healing. Rather, both poems render the dream — and the dream-poem — as dual forces, equally capable of imparting both pathogenic and curative effects. More specifically,

⁷¹ Throughout this and subsequent chapters, I use the terms 'Black Death' and plague. The former term refers to a devastating disease that affects western Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe between the years 1346 and 1353 as treated in Benedictow, *The Black Death*, p. 3. The latter term is somewhat more general, referring to subsequent outbreaks of plague that may or may not have been related to the Black Death. Both the Black Death and subsequent plague epidemics left a similar mark, claiming lives in catastrophic proportions.

the *House of Fame* devolves into a nightmare without end, despite the narrator's opening exclamation, 'God turne us every drem to goode!' The *Parliament of Fowls* 'plays out' the two inscriptions on the dream gate facing the narrator, one professing cure and bliss, and the other danger and lifelessness. Both poems build on and transform antecedent literary sources that incorporate dreams, including works by Cicero, Dante, and Alain de Lille.

The romance-tragedy *Troilus and Criseyde* is the subject of Chapter 4, entitled 'Literary *Lechecraft*: Contagion and Cure in *Troilus and Criseyde*'. Freed from the generic constraints of the dream vision, medicine in *Troilus and Criseyde* is no longer closely associated with or contained within the dream. Using the romance-tragedy genre allows for a more sophisticated and nuanced exploration of medicine and dreams as independent yet related modes of perception. Medicine appears in the poem most overtly in the form of Troilus's lovesickness. While language and letters are associated with disease, dreams are associated with prophecy, interpretation, and healing. *Troilus and Criseyde*, like the *House of Fame*, records Chaucer's recognition of his own involvement in the potentially harmful enterprise of literary practice even as it becomes his attempt to mitigate such harm.

Chapter 5, returning to the dream-vision form with a consideration of the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, explores how paradox and irony function to reassemble that which has become divided and fragmented. In this way, the dream attempts to bring about wholeness, or healing, through the processes of re-visioning, rebalancing, and re-memembering. The final chapter, 'Ravishing the Dream: The Nun's Priest's Tale', argues that although medicine and dreams appear together in the Nun's Priest's Tale, neither retains any significant measure of power; rather, individual action and speech become the life-saving forces. Ultimately, *Dreams, Medicine, and Literary Practice* shows that the confluence of medicine and dreams in these poems constitutes a vital dimension of Chaucer's work — one that reveals a profound connection between literature and the fundamentally human experiences of disease, healing, and dreaming.

CHAUCER, LITERARY ASCLEPIAN: LATE ANTIQUE DREAM THEORY AND THE *BOOK OF THE DUCHESS*

Late medieval understandings of medicine and dreams are of immediate relevance to Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, which is thematically concerned with both. Surprisingly, critical response addressing these themes is relatively limited.¹ Many studies forward a consolationist interpretation of the dialogue between the narrator and man in black,² or address the poem's relationship to literary sources, genres, and authors.³ Building on and extend-

¹ The studies cited in this initial survey are categorized according to central thesis, though many address multiple themes. Those concerned with medicine include Loomis, 'Chaucer's Eight Years' Sickness'; Grennen, 'Hert-Huntyng in the *Book of the Duchess*'; Heffernan, 'That Dog Again'; and Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*. The poem in the context of dreams is addressed in Kiser, 'Sleep, Dreams, and Poetry in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*'.

² Among others, see Friedman, 'The Dreamer, the Whelp, and Consolation'; Hill, 'The "Book of the Duchess," Melancholy, and that Eight-Year Sickness'; Thompson, 'The Narrator as Mourner and Therapist in Chaucer's "Book of the Duchess"'; Phillips, 'Structure and Consolation in the "Book of the Duchess"'; Walker, 'Narrative Inconclusiveness and Consolatory Dialectic in the "Book of the Duchess"'; and Vaughan, 'Hunting for the Hurt in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*'. Also relevant are Morse, 'Understanding the Man in Black'; Diloranzo, 'Wonder and Words'; and Dean, 'Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*: A Non-Boethian Interpretation'.

³ Representatives here include Wimsatt, '*The Book of the Duchess*: Secular Elegy or Religious Vision?'; Donnelly, 'Challenging the Conventions of Dream Vision'; Hewitt, 'Loss and Restitution in the *Book of the Duchess*'; and Anderson, 'The Narrators in the *Book of the Duchess* and the *Parlement of Foules*'.

ing much of this work, the present essay explores medicine, dreams, and literary practice as they appear in the *Book of the Duchess*. More specifically, I first suggest that translated Greco-Arabic scientific and medical texts, together with the Black Death, inform the poem's treatment of dreams as psychological and physiological phenomena rather than prophetic media. Such influence manifests in the poem through a preoccupation with physical, psychological, and emotional states of illness or health; the validation of individual dreams; and the use of dreams as tools of diagnosis and healing. Finally, I consider the implications of the poem's unique expression of the dream-vision form.

Late medieval dream theory in the Latin West underwent a process of what Steven Kruger has termed 'somatizing'.⁴ In part, this process was due to the translation of medical and scientific texts that commenced in the twelfth century. Including the work of Greek and Arabic physicians and philosophers such as Aristotle, Hippocrates, Rhazes, and Averroës, these translations impacted oneiric theory by increasing interest in the physiology and psychology of dreaming.⁵ In consequence, an exclusively divinatory approach to dreams slowly began to erode,⁶ while the body and bodily processes became an integral feature of dream theory. Although some have argued that theories concerning the physiology and psychology of dreaming exerted little, if any, influence on literary subject matter,⁷ Chaucer's work in general and the *Book of the Duchess* in particular provide strong evidence to the contrary. As we shall see, the influence of psychological- and physiological-based dream theory, among other factors, explains many otherwise puzzling features of the *Book of the Duchess*.

Chaucer was familiar with many figures who contributed to a physiological understanding of dreams. Judging from the list of physicians provided in the General Prologue, these figures include Asclepius, Hippocrates, Galen, Rufus, Rhazes, and Avicenna, all of whom wrote on dreams in the context of medicine. The Greek demigod Asclepius is particularly important to the present inquiry, as he is best known for healing physical ailments through dream incubation

⁴ Kruger, 'Medical and Moral Authority in the Late Medieval Dream'. While Kruger suggests that 'a certain "straightening" of gender and sexual anomalies' results, I believe an alternative consequence of this process is "healing," or the transformation and reconstitution of physical, psychological, emotional, and social bodies.

⁵ On this topic see Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*.

⁶ Peden, 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature'. See also Bodenham, 'The Nature of the Dream in Late Medieval French Literature'.

⁷ The medieval perspective of individual psychology is not immediately transparent. For an accessible overview on this topic, see Kemp, *Medieval Psychology*.

(see p. 3 above).⁸ Chaucer was likely familiar with Asclepius either through Ovid's story in the *Metamorphoses* of the Raven and the Crow, the source for his Manciple's Tale, or through the medical writings of Galen, who was associated with the cult of Asclepius.⁹ In addition, the written works of Hippocrates and Avicenna, among other physicians cited in the General Prologue, discuss dreams in the context of diagnosing and curing illness.

Galen himself, together with Hippocrates, is mentioned by the black knight in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*.¹⁰ The nominal presence of these physicians in the *Duchess* suggests a measure of influence to which the narrator's dream further testifies. More specifically, it is possible to interpret the narrator's dream following the belief that dreams can indicate the humoral state of the body, to which both Galen and Hippocrates ascribed. A man wearing black features prominently in the dream, for example. The colour black is symptomatic of an imbalance in black bile, which causes melancholia, so we may conclude that the narrator is melancholic.¹¹ The narrator's dream, then, conforms to a physiological- and psychological-based theory of dream causation. Moreover, the poem's consolatory stance may either consciously or unconsciously appropriate an Asclepian use of the dream as a means of healing. This possibility is explored more fully below. Such features of the poem indicate that scientific and medical texts made available beginning in the twelfth century informed the composition of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*.

The Black Death is a second historical force that influenced the poem's composition. Chaucerians generally agree that the Black Death is responsible for the occasion of Chaucer's earliest dream-vision poem, and several studies have argued that the epidemic exerted more notable influence.¹² Historical

⁸ For more on Asclepius, see Hart, *Asclepius, the God of Medicine* and Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*. See also the section on Grecian gods in Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, pp. 201–369. Also see King, *Greek and Roman Medicine*.

⁹ See Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, pp. 162–63.

¹⁰ Line 572, addressed more fully below.

¹¹ Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine*, trans. by Gruner, p. 500. In addition, Galen's *On Diagnosis from Dreams* diagnoses a black bile imbalance from dream images of smoke, mist, or darkness. This translation is provided in Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*, trans. by Holowchak, p. 166. *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, p. 966, cites Petrus de Abano, *Liber conciliator differentiarum philosophorum precipueque medicorum appellatus* (1472), dif. 157, fol. 208^r.

¹² Including Buckler, 'Love and Death in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*'; Butterfield, 'Pastoral and the Politics of Plague in Machaut and Chaucer'; and Hinton, 'The Black Death

documents suggest one of the more obvious connections between the *Duchess* and the Black Death; namely, that Chaucer wrote the poem to commemorate Blanche, duchess of Lancaster and wife to John of Gaunt, who died in the plague outbreak of the late 1360s. Her father, Henry of Lancaster, also fell victim to the epidemic as did her only sister and her mother-in-law, Philippa, queen to Edward III. In England during the period of 1348–50, between eighty and ninety per cent of the population died.¹³ As D. W. Robertson observes, ‘The effect of these losses in a society bound together by close personal relationships must have been profound.’¹⁴ Though the point is often overlooked, the Black Death left as deep a mark on the literary world as on the social world. Two of Chaucer’s main source authors, Boccaccio and Guillaume de Machaut, directly address conditions brought about by the Black Death, in the *Decameron* and the *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* respectively.

While opinions differ regarding the degree to which these literary predecessors influenced Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, Glending Olson reads the *Decameron* in the context of plague tracts to persuasively argue for a ‘relationship between the Black Death and certain literary and social recreations’.¹⁵ Olson more specifically observes that ‘the movement from plague to pleasure in the *Decameron* reflects in some way the fact of pestilence and people’s responses to it’ and that the implications of this pattern ‘point to a late medieval view of literary pleasure as therapeutic’.¹⁶ ‘For the living’, Olson concludes, ‘singing songs and telling pleasant tales are important means of coping with the plague.’¹⁷ These observations, I would argue, apply equally to Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess* and to read the poem in the context of the plague clarifies and enhances our understanding of otherwise seemingly disparate elements.

James Wimsatt claims that the impact of the *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* on Chaucer’s *Duchess* is limited to the individualized narrative persona and a few of the opening lines.¹⁸ R. Barton Palmer, however, outlines a number of parallels between the two works, persuasively concluding that Guillaume’s poem was

and *The Book of the Duchess*, pp. 72–78.

¹³ Cartwright, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 63.

¹⁴ Robertson, ‘The Historical Setting of Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*’, p. 170.

¹⁵ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 164.

¹⁶ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 166 and 196.

¹⁷ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 204.

¹⁸ Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets*, pp. 95–97.

more of a 'deliberate model' for Chaucer than has been generally allowed.¹⁹ At the very least, evidence suggests that Chaucer had read Guillaume's *Jugement*. The poem's lengthy introductory report of the years 1348–49 includes a description of the Black Death so vivid that it would be difficult for any reader to gloss over or dismiss. 'For everyone was badly affected', it begins,

Discolored and rendered ill;
They had buboes and large swellings
From which they died, and, to be brief,
Few dared to venture in the open air,
Or to speak together closely.
For their infected breath
Corrupted others who were healthy. (ll. 321–28)

Such passages testify to the deep impression this disease left on survivors, on everyday life, and on the written word. 'Nor was there a physician or any healer', Guillaume continues,

Who knew enough to name the cause
Of its coming, nor what it was,
(Nor applied any remedy to it)
Except that this was a disease
Which was called the Plague. (ll. 341–46)

A similar bewilderment characterizes Chaucer's narrator and the man in black. Reading the opening stanzas of the *Book of the Duchess*, we are affected with a comparable feeling of disorientation in part because Chaucer fails to address the disease as directly as Guillaume. We do not know, for example, what ails the narrator, only his symptoms and their duration. Chaucer does not name the Black Death, just as he does not name Boccaccio or Guillaume, yet detectable influence is strong in all cases.

Chaucer's indirect treatment of the Black Death is consistent with the sparse appearance of the disease in late medieval iconography. According to John B. Friedman, this oblique approach is 'perhaps the most striking feature of medieval art dealing with the plague'.²⁰ Friedman further suggests that the 'relatively small amount of what we might term direct "reportage" imagery is not, however,

¹⁹ Machaut, *The Judgment of the King of Navarre*, ed. and trans. by Palmer, p. xlv. Subsequent quotations are taken from this volume.

²⁰ Friedman, 'He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence'. Similar conclusions are reached in Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*.

evidence of unconcern for the subject'.²¹ This low reportage can be explained, at least in part, by 'the very slow development of an artistic vocabulary by which to describe the plague'.²² In addition, it is quite possible that the Black Death is not directly mentioned in Chaucer's works because his poetic imagination was not captured by the morbid details of the disease,²³ as was apparently the case for Guillaume and Boccaccio; rather, Chaucer seems concerned with the psychological and emotional impact left on those who witnessed and survived the epidemic. More exactly, the *Book of the Duchess* does not so much record the devastation left in the wake of the Black Death as respond to that devastation. This difference helps to explain Chaucer's unique representation of disease in the *Book of the Duchess* as compared to that of contemporary literary works. It also supports a main claim of this chapter; namely, that Chaucer's dream-poem functions as a curative agent.

Other relatively surface features of the *Duchess* may indicate the influence of the Black Death. This influence helps to explain aspects of the poem as well as changes occurring in oneiric theory and the dream-vision genre throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Black Death constitutes one of many forces that contributed to changes in literary form and expression. If, as Hans Robert Jauss argues, 'art is understood as a sign and carrier of meaning for a social reality',²⁴ then the impact of the Black Death and newly translated scientific material on dreams and medicine necessarily altered the compositional milieu. This alteration can be traced in the *Book of the Duchess*. The fact that physicians and plague tract authors regularly prescribed people to 'fuge cito, vade longe, rede tarde' (flee quickly, go far, come back slowly)²⁵ helps to explain the otherwise strange presence of the black knight in the forest, for example. Moreover, in the late Middle Ages Fortune was frequently blamed for the Black Death, a sentiment that is expressed in Chaucer's *Duchess* through the chess metaphor.²⁶ Perhaps most importantly, the plague generated pervasive melan-

²¹ Friedman, 'He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence', p. 76.

²² Friedman, 'He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence', p. 76.

²³ Aside from the compositional context the Black Death serves for the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer mentions the disease only in the Pardoner's Tale, as Friedman's title, as a line from the Pardoner's Tale, reminds us. The tale was likely written much later than the *Book of the Duchess*.

²⁴ Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 108. Jauss devotes one chapter to genre theory and medieval literature, pp. 76–109.

²⁵ Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*, p. 360.

²⁶ These features are noted in Hinton, 'The Black Death and *The Book of the Duchess*', pp. 73–74.

choly, a condition that is found throughout the *Book of the Duchess*. Indeed, the disease wrought upon survivors a type of suffering different from that of its victims, but arguably no less intense. Regarding the 1348 outbreak in Florence and Siena that reduced populations by more than half, Millard Meiss claims that the ‘survivors were stunned’.²⁷

It is precisely this emotional state that afflicts the narrator as the *Book of the Duchess* opens. Confessing that he has ‘felynge in nothyng’ (feeling in nothing), (l. 11) and ‘may nat slepe wel nygh noght’ (cannot sleep hardly at all) (l. 3), he apparently suffers from melancholy and insomnia. The knight that appears in narrator’s dream is similarly melancholic.²⁸ We are provided with more information concerning the source of the knight’s woe than for the narrator’s woe. When the man in black first appears, he recites a song that begins with an apostrophic address to death:

Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
That thou noldest have taken me,
Whan thou toke my lady swete,
That was so fair, so fresh, so fre. (ll. 481–84)

These words express the black knight’s sorrow and establish a relationship between words and healing that constitutes much of the poem itself. His lament also tells us that his lady has died while in the flush of youth. Speaking to the narrator moments later, the man in black continues to ruminate on death:

deth ys so ful my foo	<i>so completely my enemy</i>
That I wolde deye, hty wolde not soo;	<i>desired to; it would desire it not</i>
For whan I folwe hyt, hit wol flee;	
I wolde have hym, hyt nyl nat me.	<i>does not want</i> (ll. 583–86)

Such morbid thoughts, coupled with the lady’s actual death and the knight’s presence in the forest, reflect the epidemic conditions that inform the poem’s composition. In his dream vision Chaucer is no less concerned with the Black Death than is Guillaume or Boccaccio: he simply chronicles the scars left by the disease from a different angle. Specifically, the *Book of the Duchess* does not directly witness death but rather the psychological and emotional impact of death on the survivors who witness it.

²⁷ Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, p. 65.

²⁸ Andrew Wear provides more information on melancholy in this context. See Wear, ‘Fear, Anxiety and the Plague in Early Modern England’, p. 348.

According to A. C. Spearing, the *Book of the Duchess* establishes 'a clear linkage of cause and effect on the psychological plane', one that leads from the narrator's sickness to his reading, bartering, sleeping, and dreaming.²⁹ The narrator's dream can therefore be interpreted as a result of both the external circumstances of his 'real life' and the internal circumstances of his mind and body. By commingling psychological and physical concerns in this way, the *Duchess* suggests that the dream can be interpreted as resulting from either external or internal causes which once again follows the scientific views expressed by Aristotle and other Greco-Arabic philosophers and physicians.

In this chapter, I wish to explore specifically the close relationship of the physical body to both literature and dreams in the *Book of the Duchess*, and the consequences of these relationships. Physical concerns occupy centre stage at the opening of the poem as the narrator, unable to sleep, seeks a book 'To rede and drive the night away' (l. 49). Reading the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone leads him to barter with the god of sleep, and eventually to sleep itself. In this case, literature — specifically the act of reading literature — cures the narrator's insomnia, if not the 'sicknesse' from which, he says, 'I have suffered this eight yeer' (ll. 36–37). In effect, the book replaces the absent physician: 'there is phisicien but oon', the narrator explains, 'That may me hele' (ll. 39–40).³⁰ By placing the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone in his narrator's hands, Chaucer invites comparison between the narrator and Ceyx and Alcyone. Evaluating the narrator's situation in the context of Ceyx and Alcyone, it is clear that somatic concerns are strong in both cases. However, whereas the suffering of the *Duchess* narrator is alleviated with a book, Alcyone's suffering is answered by the appearance of her husband in a dream. Yet the lovers' case is more nuanced than the narrator's, for it is not Alcyone's emotional health that is restored; rather, it is her husband's physical body that is temporarily resurrected through the dream. Further complicating matters, neither Ceyx nor Alcyone is, strictly speaking, 'cured' by the dream.

We might gain further insight by comparing Chaucer's rendition of the Ceyx and Alcyone tale with Ovid's version. Immediately discernible is the intensified presence and function of the physical body in Chaucer's account of the tale. Chaucer's Morpheus actually inhabits the dead body of Ceyx while visiting Alcyone in her dream. This is Juno's most important message for Morpheus:

²⁹ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 55.

³⁰ This obscure comment may refer to Christ, who is frequently identified as 'the first physician', as noted in Grmek, 'The Concept of Disease', p. 258.

And byd hym that, on alle thing,	
He take up Seys body the kyng,	<i>the body of King Ceyx</i>
That lyeth ful pale and nothyg rody.	<i>without colour</i>
Bid hym crepe into the body	
And doo hit goon to Alcyone	<i>make it go</i>
The quene, ther she lyeth alone. (ll. 141–46)	

Chaucer's Juno then instructs Morpheus to make the body of Ceyx speak to Alcyone — 'And do the body speke' (l. 149). The relationship here between Alcyone's dream, the dead body of her husband, and language is intimate indeed. Far more so than in Ovid's account, which features Morpheus changing his own body to look like Ceyx rather than occupying the actual corpse. In effect, Chaucer uses the dream as a medium through which to resurrect the body of the dead king. One might argue further that he is physically reconstituted, if only momentarily, through the poem's use of both language and dream. Focus returns to the physical body as Chaucer's Ceyx speaks to Alcyone in her dream: 'Bury my body', he instructs, 'for such a tyde | Ye mowe hyt fynde the see beside' (ll. 207–08). In Ovid's account, no such direction is given.

In addition to strengthening the presence of the physical body, Chaucer's rendition of Ovid's tale deemphasizes the role of prophecy while granting the individual dreamer more power. Regarding prophecy, Ovid tells us that Ceyx embarks on his sea-voyage for the 'help and comfort' of Apollo's oracle.³¹ Chaucer, however, gives no reason for Ceyx's journey, simply stating that 'This king wol wenden over see' (l. 67). Further, Ovid writes that Alcyone's grief can be traced in part to prophetic insight of 'woes to come',³² while Chaucer is silent on the point. Regarding individual dreamers, agency in Ovid's account focuses on Juno, who motivates the god of sleep to send Morpheus to Alcyone. The dream is sent in place of fulfilling Alcyone's prayers and offerings for the safe return of her husband. Ovid's Ceyx tells Alcyone in her dream, 'Your prayers availed me nothing. I am dead.'³³ In contrast, Chaucer's Alcyone has more direct agency. She prays to Juno for a dream telling of her husband and her prayer is answered with the dream.

In typical fashion, however, Chaucer endorses individual dreaming even as he warns against it. By way of endorsement, the narrator's dream and the *Book of the Duchess* itself clearly model the experience of individual dreaming.

³¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Melville, p. 262.

³² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Melville, p. 263.

³³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Melville, p. 269.

As a literary account of a dream experienced by our unidentified and otherwise unremarkable narrator, the *Book of the Duchess* forces its audience to pay attention to the common individual's dream. To discount individual dreaming would be to discount the poem as well. From a generic perspective, Larry D. Benson claims that the dream vision allowed for 'a fully developed and consistently maintained personal, dramatic point of view'.³⁴ In this respect, the *Book of the Duchess* clearly differs from biblical and antique contexts in which dreams and visions are usually awarded to prominent figures such as kings or saints. Kathryn L. Lynch has claimed that the poem presents 'a new and different structuring of knowledge that quite literally foregrounds the individual',³⁵ yet it appears that Chaucer himself does not entirely trust this knowledge. Not only is this mistrust reflected in the poem's paradoxical presentation of individual dreaming but also in the style which often relies on obfuscation and complication. Unaided by interpretive assistance, the reader is left disoriented by the narrator's individual dream.

Chaucer effects one final alteration to the Ceyx and Alcyone tale; that is, by concluding it with the end of Alcyone's dream. Immediately following the words Ceyx speaks to his wife in her dream, Alcyone awakens and the narrator interjects to report:

With that hir eyen up she casteth
And saw noght. 'Allas!' quod she for sorwe,
And deyede within the thridde morwe. *three days* (ll. 212–14)

These short, cryptic lines accomplish three moves that are important for the remainder of the *Duchess*. First, Chaucer rewrites Alcyone as one who does not see anything upon waking from her dream. Failing to see, she also fails to follow the advice Ceyx offers in the dream and, perhaps even as a result, soon dies. In this way, Alcyone is similar to the narrator who, according to some, similarly fails to 'see' or properly interpret the Ceyx and Alcyone tale he has read. Second, Chaucer's Alcyone provides a model of what happens in the absence of consolation and a visionary guide in the case of grief and dreams respectively, as both are absent for her.³⁶ Finally, Chaucer distinguishes between those

³⁴ Benson, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, p. 180.

³⁵ Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, p. 49.

³⁶ This point represents one of the most significant differences between Chaucer's account of the Ceyx and Alcyone tale and that of Guillaume de Machaut in *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*. Guillaume's Ceyx speaks more kindly to Alcyone, and she wakes not only recalling her dream but looking to embrace her husband. Guillaume also includes Ovid's ending. Chaucer's work builds on and responds to Machaut, as well as Ovid, in crucially important ways which will be

who receive a dream and those who interpret it. The significance of this difference becomes apparent once the *Duchess* narrator falls asleep. He, as dreamer, occupies Alcyone's former role while we, as readers, occupy his former role. In both cases, the reader bears the interpretive burden, regardless of the dreamer's response to their own dream. As such, the reader also risks misinterpreting. Here we see that dreaming, reading, and (mis)interpretation are among the poem's central areas of concern, particularly as these practices relate to other main themes such as grief, memorializing, health and disease, and philosophical inquiry into reality.

At this point, it may be useful to recall that Augustine, in *De Genesi ad litteram* (*Literal Commentary on Genesis*), identifies three kinds of vision: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual.³⁷ More specifically,

one through the eyes, by which we see the letters; a second through the spirit, by which we think of our neighbor even when he is absent; and a third through an intuition of the mind, by which we see and understand love itself.³⁸

Spearing demonstrates Chaucer's complex reception of this richly diverse historical material on various types of visions, arguing that the *Book of the Duchess* exhibits features of all three types of vision, and that it can be classified and interpreted according to each.³⁹

It is equally possible to see reflected in the *Book of the Duchess* a synthesis of diverse oneiric traditions. Physician Petrus de Abano, for example, discusses three types of what he terms *somnia* — *somnium naturale*, *somnium animale*, and *somnium coeleste* — as Walter Clyde Curry notes:

Petrus de Abano calls the first a *somnium naturale* because 'it originates in the dominion of bodily complexions and humours'; the second a *somnium animale* because it 'springs from the great anxiety and perturbation of the waking mind'; and the third a *somnium coeleste* because 'it is brought to pass through impressions made by those celestial minds or intelligences which are said to direct the heavenly bodies in their courses, since they are able to stamp their figures or influences upon the Imagination in accordance with their natures'.⁴⁰

discussed further below. For a more focused comparison of Chaucer and Guillaume on this subject, see Palmer, 'The Book of the Duchess and Fonteinne Amoureuse', p. 388.

³⁷ It is important to note that these are not three kinds of dreaming and that for Augustine all dreams are categorized as spiritual visions.

³⁸ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. by Taylor, p. 185.

³⁹ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 57.

⁴⁰ Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, p. 207.

Rather than classify the *Book of the Duchess* according to these various systems, it is perhaps more useful to recognize that the poem incorporates and comments on a substantial body of oneiric theories ranging from the Greek and neo-Platonic philosophers to Greco-Islamic physicians, classical paganism, and Christianity.

Chaucer's omission of the remainder of the Ceyx and Alcyone tale should more fully alert us to the literary process itself and the increased emphasis Chaucer places on it. Ovid continues his story with Alcyone's discovery of her husband's body floating on the surf and the lovers' subsequent metamorphoses into birds. In contrast, Chaucer's poem at this point transfers the locus of concern back to the narrator and the transformational or curative effects of reading. That is, Chaucer replaces the lovers metamorphosing into birds with the narrator's metamorphosis through reading. To accomplish this, the narrator speaks of his own condition directly after telling us of Alcyone's death:

For thus moche dar I saye wel:	
I had be dolven everydel	<i>completely buried</i>
And ded, right thurgh defaute of slep,	<i>because of lack of sleep</i>
Yif I ne had red and take kep	<i>taken heed</i>
Of this tale next before.	<i>just now related</i> (ll. 221–25)

Not only has reading the story cured the narrator's insomnia, but it has actually saved his life. While some may accuse the narrator of shallow reading or even misinterpretation, he takes from the tale what he needs — that is, a cure for insomnia — unlike Alcyone who 'saw noght' in her dream. Moreover, that the dream is all but inseparable from the book in Chaucer's poem invites us to compare Alcyone's inability to see or interpret her dream with the narrator's reading and indeed our own. Finally, this segue between the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone and the narrator's dream re-emphasizes reading as transformative and curative while refraining to the physical body by speaking in terms of sleep and death.

In the *Book of the Duchess* Chaucer deemphasizes prophecy while emphasizing the individual dreamer because his purpose is neither to foretell the future nor to profess truth. These were domains mediated by the dream in antique pagan literary sources, such as Ovid, Homer, and Virgil, and in the Bible. Instead, Chaucer uses the dream as a literary tool to diagnose and heal physiological and psychological ailments. He simultaneously leverages the dream philosophically in order to explore liminal spaces; for example, the interfaces between reality and illusion, and between nature and art.

These spaces become more apparent once the narrator falls asleep. Dreaming of a bright May morning complete with sunshine, harmonious birdsong, and

blue skies, he finds himself in a room with walls that are constructed of glass. These walls vividly display scenes from the *Roman de la Rose*:

And alle the walles with colours fyne
Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose. (ll. 332–34)

Literally built of stories, the walls intervene in the narrator's experience of the natural world. The narrator's next remark, that 'My wyndowes were shette echon' (l. 335), emphasizes this intervention, lending a paradoxically stifling feel to the sun and birdsong he describes. Art in general and words in particular clearly mediate and perhaps even block the direct experience of the natural world in this scene. In addition, stories from and about the past mediate the narrator's present dream, which will become the dream-vision poem.

As a dream and as literary art, the *Book of the Duchess* performs a profoundly mediating role itself. That is, the functions performed by dreams within the *Duchess* underscore possible functions performed by Chaucer's dream-vision poem itself. Dream-vision literature is generally well suited to perform a mediating role, as both language and dreams reside in the liminal space between reality and illusion. The narrator's written account mediates our experience of his dream, just as both dream and language mediate the resurrection of Ceyx from death to life-likeness. Chaucer's experience of historical 'truth' is similarly mediated by the literature of his predecessors as well as his own poem. In turn, the dream and language mediate or reside in the liminal space between death and life, truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, joy and sorrow, disease and health. Due to the poem's elegiac purpose and the pestilential context, Chaucer's liminal inquiry focuses on the physical body as it exists between death and life — as it survives in the dream and through literature. It is also the space of memory, recreating how a dead loved one exists for one who is himself left half-alive, emotionally stunned by incomprehensible events.

Lynch observes that 'the medievals were quite interested in the marginal relationship of body and soul during vision'.⁴¹ The *Book of the Duchess* seems to place more emphasis on the body itself, as well as mind and emotion, almost to the exclusion of the soul, reflecting broad intellectual developments that occurred during the late medieval period. In fact, as Jean-Claude Schmitt observes,

the distinction between true dreams (of divine origin) and false dreams (those *fantasmata* that are nothing more than diabolical illusions) became less and less sig-

⁴¹ Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 49.

nificant as more attention was devoted to dreams deriving solely from the human being, his or her mind and body.⁴²

Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* confirms these claims, as a poem clearly concerned with the individual dream as it expresses both mind and body yet 'whose status *vis-à-vis* truth is ambiguous'.⁴³

Importantly, the first two sections of the poem provide a referential framework within which the narrator's dream is situated. This structure in turn provides further illustration of the developments in late medieval oneiric theory. Specifically, consequent to the narrator's complaints about his health in the first section and Chaucer's alterations of Ovid's tale in the second, readers are prepared for the narrator's dream in the third section. We are consequently more likely to accept the highly individual dream that we are told, which emphasizes psychological and physical concerns, and less likely to look for prophecy or absolute truth. Palmer reaches a similar conclusion, contending that the reader should understand the narrator's dream 'not as an *oraculum*, as a revelation of the truth of experience that experience by itself cannot afford, but rather as a natural reaction to the narrator's depressing reading and melancholy'.⁴⁴ Indeed, the *Book of the Duchess* represents the dream as a force arising out of the body, and in turn giving rise to the body, rather than arising out of truth and/or giving rise to truth.

The narrator's dream records a transformation of other accepted aspects of medieval dream theory in more fundamental ways. Having just finished reading a story that requires interpretation — and which, in fact, he has been criticized for not interpreting correctly — the narrator tells us he has dreamt a dream beyond interpretation:

Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,	<i>dreamt; entirely sweet</i>
So wonderful that never yit	
Y trowe no man had the wyt	<i>I trust; intelligence</i>
to konne wel my sweven rede.	<i>interpret; correctly</i> (ll. 276–79)

No one, he warns, will be able to interpret his dream, including biblical dream interpreter Joseph and dream scholar Macrobius. Yet if the separate sections are to cohere at all, the *Book of the Duchess* demands interpretation. That is, the dream-poem embeds within itself the simultaneous necessity for and preclusion of interpretation. To understand how this aspect of the poem is important,

⁴² Schmitt, 'The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West', p. 278.

⁴³ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 135.

⁴⁴ Palmer, 'The Book of the Duchess and Fonteinne Amoureuse', p. 388.

we must closely consider Christian and pagan approaches to the dream, represented by the poem's allusive references to Joseph and Macrobius.

Although the narrator describes Joseph as 'he that redde so | The kyn-ges metynge Pharaon' (he that interpreted | The dream of King Pharaoh) (ll. 281–82), in the biblical account Joseph credits God with the power of interpretation. When the King's cupbearer and baker tell Joseph that they have no one to interpret their dreams, Joseph replies 'Do not interpretations belong to God?'.⁴⁵ Joseph responds in a similar manner to the Pharaoh's request for dream interpretation, claiming 'It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer'.⁴⁶ For early Christian writers, such biblical passages formed the foundation on which they built their 'hermeneutical rules'.⁴⁷ It is precisely such a structured hermeneutical practice that Chaucer disrupts by crafting a dream vision beyond interpretation. The resistance to interpretation relates centrally to the surrounding narrative of the *Book of the Duchess*, just as Joseph's interpretations are pivotal to the surrounding biblical narrative. Regarding the latter, Jean-Marie Husser explains that Joseph's role in Genesis 40–41 serves 'to highlight the fact that dream interpretation is a special charism, a prophetic act inspired by God, by contrast with the methods of diviners'.⁴⁸ In the Bible, Joseph's practice of dream interpretation renders him a prophet and allows him 'to pass from an initial humble to a final, elevated situation'.⁴⁹ By declaring Joseph unable to interpret the dream it relates, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* purposefully frustrates such hermeneutical rules and disrupts social classifications that rely on these religious- and dream-centred approaches to knowledge and truth.

Considering that the poem has already suppressed references to prophecy in the Ceyx and Alcyone tale, this further step to disrupt prophetic uses of the dream in a Christian context should come as no surprise. Perhaps Chaucer intended to represent a mundane dream realistically, as an experience that often visits ordinary people, or perhaps he wished to underscore dreams as phenomena that frequently cross boundaries and elude definition, or to avoid criticism and misinterpretation of the dream-poem itself. Whatever the case, the result blocks attempts at uniform interpretation and disorders traditional categories and classes associated with dreams. Joseph, for example, is mentioned by

⁴⁵ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. by Metzger and Murphy, Genesis 40. 8.

⁴⁶ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. by Metzger and Murphy, Genesis 41. 16.

⁴⁷ Stroumsa, 'Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse', p. 194.

⁴⁸ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, p. 108.

Augustine to illustrate a point regarding dreams and their interpretation in Genesis. Augustine claims that

those to whom signs were manifested in the spirit by means of certain likenesses of corporeal objects had not yet the gift of prophecy, unless the mind had performed its function, in order that the signs might be understood; and the man who interpreted what another had seen was more a prophet than the man who had seen. Thus it is obvious that prophecy belongs more to the mind than to the spirit.⁵⁰

Accordingly, Pharaoh, who perceived an image through spirit, is less a prophet than Joseph, who interprets that image through mind. These points show how Chaucer challenges the idea that dream images are divine in origin while disallowing the process of clearly, rationally, and correctly interpreting those images. Instead of being concerned with dreams as they function in a pagan or Christian context, or how they may reveal spirit, mind, social status or prophetic insight, the *Book of the Duchess* uses the dream to resurrect White in body and mind, question established truth, and reconstitute self and society in various ways. Most importantly, the poem renders itself — as poem — the locus of control for these endeavours.

Yet religious considerations are by no means entirely absent from the text. Pagan and Christian differences may play a partial role in Chaucer's altered version of the pagan Ceyx and Alcyone tale. While prophecy, dreams, and dream interpretation played a wide variety of roles in Greco-Roman antiquity, the Christian church was wary of them. As early as 813, it was decreed that 'If any presbyter or cleric observes auguries or divinations or dreams or lots or phylacteries, that is [magical] writings, let him be prepared to undergo the penalties of the canons'.⁵¹ Such legislation responded to the perception that divination, dreams, and prophecy potentially threatened the cosmic role of God. Dreams unveil the degree to which medieval oneiric theory was caught between a Christian doctrine suspicious of dreams and antique authorities such as Plato and Macrobius for whom they functioned quite centrally. The *Book of the Duchess* refuses both pagan and Christian tenets on the issue. Specifically, the poem rejects prophecy, a central aspect of pagan antiquity, while increasing emphasis on the physical body, a locus of mistrust for Christianity. Indeed, the late Middle Ages witnessed an 'enduring suspicion of dreams — gateway of the devil — and of the mistrust of the body and the senses'.⁵² Based on these

⁵⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. by Taylor, p. 189.

⁵¹ Cited in McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 399.

⁵² Schmitt, 'The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West', p. 279.

observations, we might conclude that the force behind the *Book of the Duchess* extends beyond professing or commenting on religious attitudes toward dreams, divination, and the body. Rather, both paganism and Christianity become part of the construct against which the poem defines its own ontological, artistic, memorial, and social purposes.

Not only is the narrator's dream beyond the Christian interpretive model, but it is also beyond secular hermeneutics, judging from the reference to Macrobius. In marked contrast to the biblical figure of Joseph, Macrobius was a pagan neo-Platonist, considered one of the highest oniric authorities during the medieval period. In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius classifies dreams into five main categories: *somnium*, *visio*, *oraculum*, *insomnium*, and *visum*. He dismisses the *insomnium* (nightmare) and the *visum* (apparition) as 'not worth interpreting since they have no prophetic significance'.⁵³ According to Macrobius, then, dreams are valuable only for their prophetic potential, and to that end they are interpreted. The narrator's dream escapes clear categorization according to the Macrobian system, but it also resists all interpretative attempts and is not prophetic. In consequence, the poem uniformly challenges the Macrobian approach to dreams. By alluding to Macrobius, the poem reinforces a denial of dreams as prophetic or truth-bearing and further presents a physiological and psychological model of dreams and dreaming.

With the *Book of the Duchess* Chaucer participates in an oneiric conversation that dates to Greco-Roman antiquity. Medieval Europe was heir to a debate among antique physicians, magicians, and philosophers regarding 'on one hand, the presumption of a seamless continuum between the waking world and the dreamworld [...] and, on the other, the presumption that dreams can be connected with another or higher truth hidden to those awake'.⁵⁴ While the Greco-Roman world approached dreams in a variety of ways, a central difference among the perspectives concerned whether dreams were interpretable or not. Some, like the Epicureans, claimed that the 'denial of divine influence on human life led directly to the denial of divination, including dream interpretation'.⁵⁵ Others believed that dreams held some interpretive promise — whether prophetic, diagnostic, or epistemological. The physiological and psychological approach to dreaming represented yet another perspective.

⁵³ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, p. 88.

⁵⁴ Walde, 'Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age?', pp. 122–23.

⁵⁵ Walde, 'Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age?', p. 123.

The immediate historical milieu of late medieval Europe reinforced Chaucer's reception of these various approaches to dreaming that were made recently available through translation. The Black Death not only forced a re-examination of the fundamental questions that underlie the antique interest in dreams — questions of fate, free will, God, death, and life — but also formulated different answers. Chaucer's dream-vision poem, the *Book of the Duchess*, can be read as an exploration of such questions. The reference to Joseph, for example, may signal a type of 'religious dissidence'⁵⁶ generated by the failure of Christianity to provide answers or healing for victims of the Black Death and those who witnessed its apparently senseless horror. The reference to Macrobius may signal a type of rational dissidence generated by a similar failure of prophecy and reason.⁵⁷ For those living through the epidemic, faced with piles of corpses and the prospect of imminent death themselves, prophecy was relatively worthless.⁵⁸ For many, the Black Death drastically altered epistemological inquiries associated with the dream during antiquity. This context helps us to understand the composition of a dream-poem that purposefully resists categorization within established epistemological milieus. To the extent that a prophecy-based approach to dreams is no longer valid for a post-Black Death world, the *Book of the Duchess* records a questioning of established oneiric theory. The poem moves dreams away from clear categorization and toward increasing complexity; away from prophetic insight of the future and toward diagnosis and healing of present conditions; away from singular interpretations and toward epistemological and ontological explorations. As we have seen, Chaucer accomplishes these shifts by omitting the role of prophecy, increasing the presence of the physical body as well as psychological and emotional states, rendering the narrator's dream mundane rather than divine, and frustrating the hermeneutic process.

⁵⁶ Meiss uses the phrase to describe what he terms 'a polarized religious response' to the Black Death expressed either as fervor or dissidence. See Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, p. 93.

⁵⁷ The poem mentions other well-known thinkers including Argus, the inventor of Arabic numerals (l. 435), Pythagoras (ll. 667 and 1167), and Socrates (l. 717).

⁵⁸ Several plague accounts support these claims, including those of Agnolo di Tura del Grasso who wrote about the plague in Siena in *Cronaca senese attribuita ad Agnolo di Tura del Grasso detta la Cronaca Maggiore*, and Jean de Venette who wrote of the plague in France. Boccaccio's *Decameron* paints a vivid portrait of the extent to which dead bodies pervaded everyday life as a result of the Black Death.

Ironically, once the imagination, imagery, and vision involved in dreams were no longer needed for prophetic interpretation, the literary form of the dream vision blossomed quite naturally. Alastair J. Minnis describes the process:

Imaginary vision, then, has moved from being a divine gift of significant imagery which with correct interpretation can yield accurate information about future events, an oracle which comes willy-nilly to the human recipient (as in the Augustinian theory of the *triplex genus visionum*), to something made up, quite voluntary, within human control, and not necessarily having anything to do with the future — an act of deliberate literary creation.⁵⁹

Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* clearly maps this development with its rendition of the Ceyx and Alcyone tale, which requires us to replace prophetic interpretation with the literary process and product themselves. In these circumstances, the individual dreamer and reader are equal to, if not more important than, the high-class dreamers and interpreters of the antique oneiric world. As the narrator's dream progresses, it continues to illustrate the impact of medical and scientific attitudes toward dreaming made newly available to the Middle Ages. As we shall see, the narrator's dream offers curative opportunities to White, the knight, the dreamer, and the audience.

White and Black

When the narrator first happens upon him in the forest, the knight sings a *lai* about his lady White. In reading the *Duchess*, some critics have focused on White's absence. Maud Ellmann, for example, argues that White's name 'remarks a lack within the narrative, the lack which drives the text to its impossible fulfillment',⁶⁰ while Gayle Margherita suggests that 'women are called upon to represent lack so that men may cover over the lack with language'.⁶¹ While one cannot deny the absence of White, the Ceyx and Alcyone tale provides a compelling frame for recognizing her presence as well. Like Alcyone, the narrator experiences a dream that functions to resurrect a loved one who has died, reconstituting her physical form; unlike Alcyone, the narrator's dream also memorializes the character traits of the deceased. These effects are accomplished as much through language, images, and memory as through the dream.

⁵⁹ Minnis, Scattergood, and Smith, *The Shorter Poems*, p. 45.

⁶⁰ See Ellmann, 'Blanche', p. 109.

⁶¹ See Margherita, 'Originary Fantasies and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', p. 127.

In fact, all of these elements work together beginning almost immediately with the appearance of the man in black within the narrator's dream. The knight's *lai* effectively constructs an image of White through language:

so fair, so fresh, so fre,
So good that men may wel se
Of al goodnesse she had no mete! *equal* (ll. 484–86)

Moving quickly from her physical constitution to her moral constitution, the description exemplifies the dream's more general function of employing language to construct an image that resurrects and memorializes the dead White. Hence Chaucer builds on the medieval perception that dreams 'are able to navigate that middle realm where connections between corporeal and incorporeal are forged, where the relationship between the ideal and the physical is defined'.⁶² Indeed, the appearance of White in the poem forges a connection between her physical form and her ideal identity.

This aspect of Chaucer's poem again bears the mark of Guillaume's influence: in *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, as Steven Davis has observed, 'The vehicle of knowledge is a vision mediated by Morpheus, who in the course of the poem becomes an emblem of the poetic imagination itself'.⁶³ Adopting Guillaume's version of Morpheus, Chaucer's poem implies that poetic imagination is responsible for resurrecting Ceyx's dead physical body. This is precisely what the narrator's poetic imagination will do for White. As the poem opens, the narrator tells us that imagination serves to animate his mind: 'For sorwful ymagynacioun | Ys alway hooly in my mynde' (ll. 14–15). These lines, together with the poem's rejection of pagan and Christian attitudes toward dreaming, promote imagination and the imaginative processes of dreaming, writing, and reading as creative forces. Perhaps paradoxically, sorrow or melancholy is also part of the creative stimulus here; that is, the sadness on the part of the narrator and the knight serve the imaginative process, which in turn resurrects White.

An essentially imaginative process continues as the narrator and knight enter into conversation. Describing his lady in detail, the knight compares her to the moon and stars, claiming that she had

Surmounted hem alle of beaute,
Of maner, and of comlynesse, *graciousness*
Of stature, and of wel set gladnesse. (ll. 826–28)⁶⁴

⁶² Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 34.

⁶³ Davis, 'Guillaume De Machaut, Chaucer's "Book of the Duchess", and the Chaucer Tradition', p. 396.

⁶⁴ Robertson, 'The Historical Setting of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', argues that this

These compliments concern not only her appearance but also her character and morality. His subsequent remarks concern her comely dancing, singing, laughing, and speaking. Yet his comments eventually converge upon her physical characteristics. The man in black describes the precise colour of his lady's hair and the expression of her eyes. He reports that her face was 'whit, rody, fresh, and lyvely hewed' (white, rosy, fresh, and brightly hued) (l. 905); her neck 'was whit, smothe, streght, and pure flat, | Wythouten hole or canel-boon' (ll. 942–43); 'Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre, | Semed a round tour of yvoyre' (ll. 945–46). Continuing his verbal tour of White's body, the knight says:

Ryght faire shuldres and body long
 She had, and armes, every lyth *limb*
 Fattyssh, fleshy, not gret therwith; *Well rounded*
 Ryght white handes, and nayles rede; *red nails*
 Rounde brestes; and of good brede
 Hyr hippes were; a straight flat bak. (ll. 952–57)

With such overt physical descriptions, the narrator's dream resurrects the body of White in the same way that Alcyone's dream resurrects Ceyx and, by extension, Chaucer's dream vision resurrects Blanche of Lancaster. This point is made more explicit when the knight metaphorically refers to his lady as 'The soleyn fenix of Arabye' (l. 982), the phoenix symbolizing immortality, resurrection, and life after death. Again, language and dream images work together to accomplish this resurrection. Although White is not literally 'cured' by this process, her death is abstractly remedied to the extent that she is memorialized and immortalized.

For the man in black, the dream performs a related but different curative role. Directly following the *lai* is the narrator's description of the man in black's physical and emotional condition: 'Hys sorowful hert gan faste faynte | And his spirites waxen dede' (His sorrowful heart began to faint quickly | And his spirits became dead) (ll. 488–89). Full of sorrow and empty of spirit, the knight apparently suffers from the same type of emotional numbness that ails the narrator. More information on his physical condition follows: 'The blood was fled for pure drede | Doun to hys herte, to make hym warm' ('The blood fled for utter dread | Down to his heart, to make him warm') (ll. 490–91). As 'membre principal | Of the body' (l. 495) his heart has made

description of White is 'hardly a visual portrait' specific to Blanche, which points to an error of the man in black's. Specifically, though he has described virtues of White that cannot be destroyed by Fortune, he mourns the loss of her physical being (pp. 187–88).

Hys hewe chaunge and wexe grene	<i>became green</i>
And pale, for ther noo blood ys sene	
In no maner lym of hys.	<i>In any of his limbs (ll. 496–99)</i>

According to Joseph E. Grennen's suggestion that Black suffers from *cardiaca passio*, an actual condition of the heart caused by fear, distress, or sorrow, these lines describe an ailment both profoundly physiological and emotional.⁶⁵ His symptoms conform to medieval perceptions of the relationship between the physical body and the emotions following the *Isagoge* of Johannitius as detailed by Glending Olson:

An overabundance of heat at the exterior of the body leaves the heart in a weakened condition; as many discussions note, both extreme anger and extreme joy can cause death in this way. Excessive fear or sorrow, driving all the body's heat and *spiritus* to the interior, leaves one torpid, even insensate.⁶⁶

Black suffers psychologically as well: he 'spak noght, | But argued with his owne thought' (ll. 503–04) and 'had wel nygh lost hys mynde' (l. 511). Rather than resurrecting and memorializing — as in the case of White — the narrator's dream serves to accurately depict the man in black's physiological, psychological and emotional conditions. In this capacity, the narrator's dream reflects the antique perception, shared by Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen, of the dream as a diagnostic tool. Chaucer's dream-poem is unique, however, in its capacity to identify illness in the dreamer-narrator as well as those figures that appear within the dream. Based on symptoms and surrounding circumstances described in the dream, we can diagnose Black's probable condition.

It should be noted that there is no direct evidence that the narrator's dream provides any measure of cure for the man in black. This point is important considering the possibility that Black is a representation of John of Gaunt, who requested that Chaucer write the poem after his wife Blanche of Lancaster succumbed to the Black Death. In the poem, Black in fact claims that he is beyond all cure. Having briefly observed him, the narrator approaches the knight, immediately seeking to engage the healing power of story by urging him to tell his tale:

But certes, sire, yif that yee	
Wolde ought discure me youre woo,	<i>reveal to me</i>
I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,	
Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.	

⁶⁵ Grennen, 'Hert-Huntyng in the *Book of the Duchess*', pp. 133–34.

⁶⁶ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 44.

Ye mowe preve hyt be assay:	<i>prove it by testing it</i>
For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool	<i>healthy</i>
I wol do al my power hool.	<i>use my whole power</i> (ll. 548–54)

By offering his listening ear, the narrator hopes to heal Black. In response, the knight protests that nothing can heal him:

Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde,	
Ne Orpheus, god melodye,	
Ne Dedalus with his playes slye;	<i>sly tricks</i>
Ne hele me may no phisicien,	
Nought Ypocras ne Galyen. (ll. 568–72)	

Discounting the healing power of Ovid's written remedies for love, Orpheus's music, and Daedalus's mechanical skill as well as physicians Hippocrates and Galen, Black proceeds to identify himself entirely with sorrow — 'For y am sorwe, and sorwe ys y' (l. 597) — and to explain how his lady's death has turned his world upside-down. During this explanation, he speaks paradoxically of disease. He says, for example, 'Myn hele ys turned into seknesse' (l. 607), 'my wele is woo' (my wellness is woe) (l. 603), and 'my slep wakyng' (l. 611). Black speaks paradoxically to complain that he is beyond healing. Yet despite his protests, the very process of verbalization is meant to serve a curative function for the knight, based on the previous sections of the poem: the narrator's reading, for example, and the literary resurrection of White. Initially, it may appear that the poem shifts curative power entirely into the province of language and literature; however, language and literature are inextricably linked to the dream in the *Book of the Duchess*. Thus, both language and dreams are associated with healing.

On several occasions the narrator draws our attention to the relationship between tale-telling and disease or health, a relationship that lies at the heart of his interactions with the man in black. For example, the narrator reacts with sadness to his companion's explanation about White. 'And whan I herde hym tel thys tale' (l. 710), he says, 'Hyt dyde myn herte so moche woo' (l. 713). Here, the knight's words impart an injurious effect on the narrator's heart. In response, the narrator requests more specific information from the knight:

Good sir, telle me al hooly	<i>completely</i>
In what wyse, how, why, and wherefore	
That ye have thus youre blysse lore.	<i>lost your bliss</i> (ll. 746–48)

This time, the knight agrees, on the condition that the narrator listen. We then receive a detailed account of White. Importantly, when describing her soft and eloquent speech, the knight uses medical terms: 'a goodly, softe speche | Had

that swete, my lyves leche!’ (a pleasing, soft speech | Had that sweet one, my life’s physician!) (ll. 919–20) and

Of eloquence was never founde
 So swete a sownynge facounde, *an elegant speech*
 Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,
 Ne bet koude hele — *Nor could better heal* (ll. 925–28)

Black says his lady’s speech was eloquent, sweet, and healing and ‘ther was never yet throug hir tonge | Man ne woman gretly harmed’ (ll. 930–31). Although courtly poetry can certainly characterize the beloved as a source of healing, the unique aspect here is the pairing of medical references and speech. Indeed, these references are no accident; rather, they reinforce the underlying goal of narrator and poet to heal grief through tale-telling and language. Although White’s speech is healing while she is alive, it does not continue to heal after she dies — in fact, we do not hear her voice at all. Rather, speech and language themselves become the curative forces. If the man in black experiences any healing, it is tied to his linguistic remembrance of White that is achieved primarily through conversing with the narrator. Moreover, this process occurs in the narrator’s dream. In the *Book of the Duchess*, then, both language and the dream are essential to the healing process.

Yet it was White who healed the knight while she was alive. When he first saw her, he was cured of all his sorrow, the narrator explains: ‘whan I saugh hir first a-morwe | I was warished of al my sorwe’ (ll. 1103–04). In the beginning he loved her quietly, ‘For be right siker, I durste noght | For al this world telle hir my thought’ (For be quite certain, I dared not | Tell her my thoughts, for all this world) (ll. 1149–50). His reason for remaining quiet is curious indeed:

She was lady
 Of the body; she had the herte,
 And who hath that may not asterte. *may not escape* (ll. 1152–54)

What to make of this curious statement and line break? Are we to understand that White possesses the knight’s body, because she possesses his heart, or that her own heart and body are such that the knight cannot escape? Regardless of these ambiguous lines, the poem’s refrain to the physical body is clear. It is also clear that the black knight becomes lovesick because he does not speak of his love: just as using language can heal, not using language can lead to illness. Meanwhile, the knight says he composed songs to keep himself from idleness. ‘I dide my besynesse | To make songes, as I best koude’ (ll. 1156–57), and ‘Algates songes thus I made | Of my felynge, myn herte to glade’ (Nevertheless I made

songs | Of my feelings, to gladden my heart) (ll. 1171–72). The knight's attempt to assuage his lovesickness by composing songs again shows the engagement of language as a curative force. Eventually, the knight summons the courage to tell White of his love — what he thrice refers to as his 'tale' (ll. 1213, 1236, 1238). This confession initially yields more woe when she answers 'Nay', and then to bliss with her eventual acceptance of him.

The knight's account of the initial phase of his relationship with White mirrors his conversation with the narrator. In both cases, a clear relationship between language and healing is established. As the man in black resurrects White through language, he is momentarily relieved of his woe, just as his woe was initially relieved through his composition of songs and later by communicating his feelings to White. In the *Book of the Duchess*, language continues to function as the primary source of curative power.

Literary Practice and the Book of the Duchess

The dream-vision form has been employed for a variety of purposes that can be broadly separated into two groups: the philosophical vision and the love vision.⁶⁷ Boethius is representative of the first group. Centrally concerned with reconciling faith and reason, his *De consolacione Philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*) clearly uses a visionary structure to express philosophical ideas with consolatory intent. Similarly, the twelfth-century *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*) of Alain de Lille employs the form to comment on social mores from the philosophical perspective of natural laws. By contrast, love visions 'usually construct love as the highest, if not the only order of experience'.⁶⁸ Many of the French authors that influenced Chaucer wrote love visions, including Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Machaut, and Jean Froissart. Particularly influential for the Middle Ages generally and Chaucer particularly, the *Roman de la Rose* (*Romance of the Rose*) views the conflict between love and reason. In the case of both philosophical and love visions, the dream frame allows for a unique exploration of various aspects of experience through liminality, imagination, imagery, and narrative. Chaucer,

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive overview, see Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions* and Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*. For an informative overview of the love vision, see Minnis, Scattergood, and Smith, *The Shorter Poems*, pp. 36–72. For a survey of several early French love visions, see Brewer, 'The Genre of the "Parlement of Foules"'.

⁶⁸ Machaut, *The Fountain of Love*, ed. and trans. by Palmer, p. xxx.

inheriting both variations of the dream vision, often incorporates both within his own compositions.

In the case of the *Book of the Duchess*, neither form entirely meets the poem's unique circumstantial requirements. Rather than completely following either of these precedents, Chaucer uses the dream-vision form to address matters of love, loss, and philosophy in unique ways. Indeed, the *Book of the Duchess* questions Boethian conclusions concerning faith, reason, and the nature of philosophical consolation. And rather than a present love or lovesickness, the poem instead confronts an absence of love — a dead love, following Machaut. In the post-Black Death world, 'blanche fevere'⁶⁹ is effectively redefined. Originally a term for a form of lovesickness, the ailment takes on new meaning in the context of the *Book of the Duchess*, wherein a lover has suffered the death of his beloved White due to the Black Death.

While the *Duchess* undeniably draws from and builds on numerous literary precedents — including, for example, the works of Froissart, Machaut, Guillaume de Lorris, and Jean de Meun — it is a wholly original English text, at times spinning or reversing generic expectations. For example, the *Duchess* narrator-dreamer and man in black share aspects of the guide role as traditionally defined in the visionary genre. Lady Philosophy serves as guide for Boethius and Virgil serves as guide for the pilgrim Dante. Reversing this generic prescription, the narrator-dreamer serves as a type of visionary guide for the wounded knight throughout most of Chaucer's poem, offering or attempting to offer cure through conversation. As Spearing notes, it is 'highly abnormal in a medieval dream-poem for the dreamer and not an authority he meets in his dream to be the source of doctrine'.⁷⁰ Upon realizing that the lady White is actually dead, however, the narrator becomes similarly affected by this dark truth to the extent that the poem itself cannot continue.⁷¹ Despite the melancholy that both narrator and knight share, the knight does offer a measure of guidance and support for the narrator, support that has direct bearing on his literary practice. That is, traditional love visions dictate that 'the poet must himself be joyful, for otherwise he can provide no comfort' for those who are in

⁶⁹ The term appears in *Troilus and Criseyde*, I. 916.

⁷⁰ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 51.

⁷¹ Susan Schibanoff similarly argues that the dream-poem is 'doomed to failure' but for a different reason. Reading through the lens of a 'queer poetics', she claims the failure is due to the dreamer's 'apparent attempt to father a poem outside a heterosexual context'. See Schibanoff, *Chaucer's Queer Poetics*, p. 95.

love.⁷² Following these standards, the narrator's melancholy renders him unfit as a love poet. Yet as part of the imaginative construct of the dream, Michael D. Cherniss suggests, the narrator receives from the knight 'a cure for his mysterious ailment, and one aspect of this cure is his vision of himself as he should be — active, happy, and eager to participate in the innocent pleasures of life'.⁷³ From this perspective, the knight serves as a guide for the narrator-dreamer, bringing healing through the power of imagery and language. In this way, the narrator and the man in black share the traditional roles and duties of dreamer and guide.

Second, the poem's incorporation of consolation, a standard feature of many philosophical and love visions, is also unique. In *De consolazione Philosophiae*, Lady Philosophy consoles Boethius by advising him in matters of faith, reason, and free will. In traditional love visions, it is the author's duty to console those who suffer the sorrow of love. In *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, a work that, according to Butterfield, 'deeply informs' many components of Chaucer's *Duchess*,⁷⁴ Guillaume explores the love poet's pursuit of consolation through writing. Displaying a marked concern with the tension inherent to his duty as a love poet, Guillaume explores his role as love poet within the poem itself, effectively rendering authorship a main theme. The *Book of the Duchess* differs from these models by stretching beyond simple consolation to explore the transformative and curative effects of literary practice more generally. Evident in the *Book of the Duchess* is Chaucer's continuation of Guillaume's use of the visionary form for poetic self-reflection. Yet in the *Duchess*, the role of authorship is not an overt theme; instead, speech, tale-telling, and reading form the more immediate focus. More broadly, the *Duchess* explores how the dream-poem may function as a healing agent within the broader social and cultural context. Just as the *Duchess* shifts the visionary goal from prophecy to cure, it shifts the primary means of achieving this goal from dream to dream-poem — to the literary realm.

Perhaps the most innovative feature of the *Duchess* is born from the very union of dream and poem; more specifically, the *Duchess* is a child of, on one hand, the potential of dreams to heal following Asclepius and other ancient authorities and, on the other, literary practice in general and the dream-vision form in particular. Bringing these together, we may read the poem as an Asclepian healing dream experienced by the narrator who suffers from at

⁷² Machaut, *The Fountain of Love*, ed. and trans. by Palmer, p. xxxi.

⁷³ Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse*, p. 177.

⁷⁴ Butterfield, 'Lyric and Elegy in *The Book of the Duchess*', p. 43.

least three afflictions. In this way, the poem appropriates the healing potential of dreams as understood by the ancient world, moving this potential squarely into the realm of literature. By reading the dream-poem as an agent of healing, various features that are initially puzzling become more understandable. Take the appearance of the 'whelp' (l. 389), for example. D. W. Robertson and Bernard F. Huppé argue that whelps 'represent priests in their function of curing'.⁷⁵ John B. Friedman agrees that this allegorical reading 'does at least hint at the whelp's association with healing in the *Book of the Duchess*'⁷⁶ and Carol Falvo Heffernan investigates medical works that address a type of melancholy known as *melancholia canina*, suggesting that 'the whelp serves not only to bring together two melancholic voices in *The Book* but also seems to spring out of the same medical treatises which describe the affects that characterize the emotional lives of the poem's major figures'.⁷⁷ In addition, Asclepius worked with dogs to effect cures. Reading the poem as an Asclepian healing dream, the whelp's appearance is not at all odd but rather fits seamlessly as one of the curative elements. Likewise, games, literature, and hunting were usual Asclepian prescriptions given to the ill through dreams:

whether one was hotheaded or depressive, Asclepius had remedies ready to prescribe in dreams and, interestingly, they connected psychic therapy with physical activity — the quiet sitting of literary authorship for the overly passionate, and the vigorous pursuits of hunting and riding for those lacking in emotional drive.⁷⁸

Viewed as an Asclepian healing dream experienced by the melancholic narrator, the *Book of the Duchess* contains many of these curative elements, performing a range of curative tasks for a range of individual and social bodies.

It is important to note that while the narrator's dream maintains the potential to cure, we have no evidence suggesting that his various illnesses are remedied by it. In fact, the *Duchess* very quickly usurps the curative potential of the dream and transfers it to the realm of reading. As the narrator informed us early on, reading the Ceyx and Alcyone tale cured his insomnia and saved his life. In addition, the *Duchess* highlights speech and tale-telling as potentially curative, through the interactions between the narrator and the knight. While reading has proved curative for the narrator, speech is potentially cura-

⁷⁵ Huppé and Robertson, *Fruyt and Chaf*, p. 54.

⁷⁶ Friedman, 'The Dreamer, the Whelp, and Consolation', p. 147.

⁷⁷ Heffernan, 'That Dog Again', p. 186.

⁷⁸ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, p. 108.

tive for Black. Language also serves to resurrect and memorialize White. In this way, the dream-poem deftly shifts the curative potential of the dream into the realm of literary practice. Further, by emphasizing the curative role of reading in particular, the *Book of the Duchess* includes its own readers in its consolatory effects. That is, the poem is not confined to soothing the man in black's sorrow; rather, it offers the possibility of consolation, transformation, and reconstitution to the reading audience as well. As the narrator attempts to console the man in black, the cultural work of the poem attempts to reconstitute the social body. As the plague wrought physical, psychological, and emotional damage to individual and social bodies, the literary dream vision attempts to reconstitute these bodies. The consolatory function of language and literary practice extends beyond the individual body to include the social body. In terms of oneiric theory, this aspect of the *Book of the Duchess* once again records a shift away from Macrobian and biblical approaches to the dream, emphasizing prophecy and truth. Instead, the *Duchess* employs antique perceptions and uses of the dream as a diagnostic and healing medium.

In this way, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* resurrects, with White, antique practices employing the dream as a diagnostic tool and healing medium. As the poet, Chaucer performs the role of literary Asclepian, diagnosing and administering the curative prescription of the poem itself and all that it contains. Chaucer reclaims the ancient view of dreams as healing agents and then moves this potential into the realm of literary practice. While the *Duchess* offers no direct evidence that the narrator, man in black, or audience experience any measure of cure as a result of the dream or the dream-poem, we can observe that the literary dream appropriates the role of healing agent, delivering a range of antidotes, from reading and writing to hunting and chess, through imagination, imagery, and language. While these prescriptions maintain the potential to heal by reconstituting self and society, it is only for a poetic moment. The next chapter turns to the *House of Fame* and the harmful potential of dreams.

‘GOD TURNE US EVERY DREM TO GOODE!’
DREAMS, TRANSFORMATION, AND
MEDICINE IN THE *HOUSE OF FAME*

History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis, which its ‘ruses’ turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intentions. But this History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force.

—Frederic Jameson¹

With the opening prayer, ‘God turne us every drem to goode!’ (l. 1), the *House of Fame* expresses the intent to transform all dreams into virtue, material gain, and/or useful knowledge (‘goode’).² Read through the metaphor of medicine, this prayer states the narrator’s intent to cure the ills of literary endeavour, including fame and defamation, using the healing herb of the dream-poem itself. The work, however, does not necessarily achieve its stated goal. In the end, as dream turns to nightmare and healing herb becomes poison, the work aborts its professed mission, remaining unfinished. This chapter explores poetic intersections and applications of medical and oneiric knowledge in the *House of Fame* as they reflect emergent late medieval attitudes toward medicine, dreams, and literary endeavour. More specifically, I investigate the narrator’s attempt to use his literary dream vision to remedy social and literary ills.

¹ Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 102.

² Alternatively, the opening might be read as a prayer that God make the effects of dreams good for us.

Closely tracking Chaucer's poetic use of the dream as it meets and intersects with other systems of knowledge, including medicine, helps illuminate some of the specific types of cultural work literature performed in late medieval England. Using dreams and medicine as means, the *House of Fame* effectively questions all three epistemologies — dreams, medicine, and literature — as well as the poet's relationship to them.³ Neither medicine nor illness appears in the *House of Fame* in simplistic or readily apparent terms; rather, the poem employs an abstract synthesis and application of medical and oneiric knowledge that comments on the complex cultural institutions of poetics and fame. Consequently, the poem is best read when contextualized by relevant knowledge systems and cultural institutions and by antecedent literary works and other poems by Chaucer. This historically situated approach contributes to our understanding of the poem while highlighting the stakes involved in late medieval literary discourse concerning dreams and medicine.

As in the *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame* endorses the individual dream experience by foregrounding narrator Geoffrey's dream. Yet Geoffrey himself, following his prayer that God turn every dream to good, confesses his utter confusion regarding the causes of dreams: 'For hyt is wonder, be the roode, | To my wyt, what causeth swevens' (ll. 2–3). He proceeds to offer a haphazard overview of dream types and origins, listing numerous classical and contemporary dream theories ranging from Cicero to Macrobius.⁴ Whoever understands better than he does, Geoffrey says, let him explain, for he knows not whether

folkys complexions	<i>balance of bodily humours</i>
Make hem dreme of reflexions,	<i>of waking events</i>
Or ellys thus, as other sayn,	
For to gret feblenesse of her brayn,	
By abstinence of by seknesse,	
Prison stewe or gret distresse,	
Or ellys by dysordynaunce	
Of naturel acustumaunce.	<i>natural routine</i> (ll. 21–28)

Geoffrey's list highlights the various possible causes of dreams, and many linger over physical and medical concerns. Some people, Geoffrey continues, are overly

³ This line of argument can be viewed as correlative to what Delany, *Chaucer's 'House of Fame'*, terms 'skeptical fideism'. I seek to broaden our understanding by accounting for the presence and function of dreams and medicine within the poem.

⁴ For a complete list of authors and works directly referenced in the poem, see Boitani, 'Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams', p. 43.

curious in study, melancholy, or so 'ful of drede | That no man may hym bote bede' (ll. 31–32). The overt physicality aligns with Steven F. Kruger's observation that perceptions of the dream underwent a process of 'somatizing' during the later medieval period.⁵ In addition, the influence of humoral medicine, clearly evident in these dream theories, brings with it diverse disciplines, including secular and religious medicine, natural philosophy, and literary history, all of which informed fourteenth-century English culture on the topic of dreams. Each of these knowledge systems maintained a unique perspective on dreams as they may relate to illness and health, prophecy, and literature. Together, these perspectives contribute to Geoffrey's confusion regarding dreams in the opening sequence.

Despite his professed ignorance regarding the causes and significance of dreams, Geoffrey prays that his own dream will serve as an antidote to discomfort in his audience: 'shelde hem fro poverte and shonde, | And from unhap and ech disease' (ll. 88–89). Somewhat surprisingly, however, Geoffrey's prayer quickly turns to a dark curse for those who would misinterpret the narrated dream:

And whoso thorgh presumpcion,	
Or hate, or scorn, or thorgh envye,	
Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,	<i>Spite, or deceit, or rudeness</i>
Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God	<i>Misinterpret it</i>
That (dreme he barefoot, dreme he shod),	
That every harm that any man	
Hath had syth the world began	
Befalle hym therof or he sterve.	<i>before he dies</i> (ll. 94–101)

While Geoffrey's initial prayer expresses hopes of health and well-being, this subsequent prayer explicitly threatens harm and death. Set at the opening of the poem, it also immediately establishes the dream as a dual medium — both potentially harmful and potentially curative.

This double perception of dreams held currency throughout the Middle Ages. According to one view, dreams were dangerously associated with pagan practices; according to another, dreams could foretell the future through divine inspiration.⁶ Notably, one etymological branch of the medieval word 'dreme' stems from the Old English word meaning joy, revelry, and jubilation. Yet the word could also indicate a vision experienced during sleep, a nightmare, a prophetic insight, or general imaginative faculties. Arguably, all of these con-

⁵ Kruger, 'Medical and Moral Authority in the Late Medieval Dream', p. 55.

⁶ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.

notations are to be found at various points throughout the *House of Fame*, a work that is one moment comic and adventurous, the next moment dark and ominous. Thus the *Proem* and *Invocation* serve several important functions; namely, authorizing Geoffrey's individual dream; detailing a host of dream theories, many of which are physical or medical in nature; and expressing the double potential of dreams. Geoffrey's dream itself, which amounts to an account of his journey for love tidings, unfolds to reveal a similar doubleness at work within gendered relationships and literature itself.

In his dream, Geoffrey first finds himself within 'a temple ymad of glas' (l. 120), the temple of Venus. As he tours the temple, he sees the destruction of Troy, the flight of Aeneas, how Creusa was lost and died, and the various events that eventually brought Aeneas to Dido. This appearance of the Troy story in Chaucer's English poem exemplifies *translatio studii* — the transfer or translation of knowledge from one geographical and cultural sphere to another. England in the late fourteenth century was notably concerned with the source of cultural and literary authority as it passed from classical antiquity to Europe. As the following pages show, Chaucer's oneiric account of the *Aeneid* in the *House of Fame* records some of the difficulties that accompany *translatio studii*, a process that is inextricably bound up with matters of authority and history.

As Geoffrey continues to narrate the images he sees in his dream, he becomes noticeably focused on Dido and Aeneas. Engraved on the temple wall he sees how Dido makes Aeneas 'shortly at oo word | Hyr lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord' (ll. 257–58). Dido, Geoffrey tells us, deemed

That [Aeneas] was good, for he such semed.
 Allas! what harm doth apparence,
 Whan hit is fals in existence! *false to what truly exists!*
 For he to hir a traytour was;
 Wherefore she slow hirself, allas! *killed herself* (ll. 264–268)

Geoffrey's observation that false appearances can cause harm applies to the relationship between Aeneas and Dido but also to the very images that are telling the story and, by extension, the dream and the poem in which they appear. Geoffrey then makes a point to warn women against trusting appearances and unknown men — 'For, be Cryste, lo, thus yt fareth: | "Hyt is not al gold that glareth"' (ll. 271–72). On one level, then, the poem as a retelling of the Dido-Aeneas story becomes — at least momentarily — a remedy for the possible ills of love:

Al this seye I be Eneas
 And Dido, and hir nyce lest, *her foolish desire*
 That loved al to sone a gest; *a guest all to soon*

Therefore I wol seye a proverb,
 That 'he that fully knoweth th'erbe *the medical herb*
 May sauflly leye hyt to his yē' —
 Withoute drede, this ys no lye.
 But let us speake of Eneas,
 How he betrayed hir, allas,
 And lefte hir ful unkyndely. (ll. 286–95)

Figuratively, the medicinal herb referenced could be the text or images themselves, which, when viewed or read, may serve to heal. On another level, however, we as readers might question the trustworthiness of our male narrator (and author) and the images he describes. Do we know him well enough to trust him? Is he faithful to the Troy material or is he, like Aeneas, a traitor?

Dido's ensuing lamentations underscore not only the harm Aeneas caused but the harm's lasting effects. Speaking to Aeneas, she says,

O wel-away that I was born!
 For thorgh yow is my name lorn, *lost*
 And alle myn actes red and songe
 Over al thys lond, on every tonge.
 O wikke Fame! —for ther nys *wicked*
 Nothing so swift, lo, as she is! (ll. 345–50)

With these words, Dido reveals how her reputation has been irrevocably lost. Everything is known, everyone talks of her, and she cannot erase what has happened — that is, she cannot erase history — even if she lives forever. In one sense she does live forever in the pages of books that tell her story, and they may be partially to blame for her situation. So while the poem may, on one hand, function as a healing herb warning women not to trust men, it functions equally to re-inscribe the harm and defamation suffered by those such as Dido. As if recognizing the potential of literary practice to cause harm, Geoffrey abruptly interrupts his account of the Dido and Aeneas affair. He proceeds to list men who have betrayed women, including Demophon, Achilles, Paris, Jason, Hercules, and Theseus. All of these men are figures from Greek mythology, and their appearance in the poem again shows the relationship between history, literary endeavour, and fame or defamation. While an intention to provide some sort of reparation for Dido may have motivated Geoffrey to mention them, in the end he succeeds only in reinforcing their defamation as unfaithful lovers rather than erasing Dido's. At this point, then, Geoffrey encounters difficulty as he attempts to turn his dream to good — or render his dream-poem a curative agent not only for the ills of love but for the role literature plays in recreating and perpetuating such ills.

Despite the attempts to offer a balanced account of the Dido-Aeneas tale, and although he is merely reporting what he sees on the walls of a temple in his dream, it seems that Geoffrey cannot avoid participating in the incrimination of the tale. Because Dido's physical death follows the figurative death of her name, or reputation — fame, essentially — Geoffrey participates in her defamation simply by telling the tale. Moreover, neither Dido, nor Aeneas, nor anyone who tells of them — bard, poet, or narrator-dreamer — can be free of guilt. All, that is, are guilty of defaming one another and themselves. As if realizing the difficulty of transmitting cultural knowledge without simultaneously re-inscribing attending consequences, such as configurations of power that damage the reputations of historical persons or oneself as author, Geoffrey again interrupts his rendition of the tale. This time he refers the reader to antecedent sources: 'Rede Virgile in Eneydos | Or the Epistle of Ovyde' (Read Virgil's *Aeneid* | Or the epistle in Ovid's *Heroides*) (ll. 378–79).

These observations also apply to Chaucer as the ultimate source of the dream and poem. By pointing to his sources, then, Chaucer attempts to remove himself from participating in the potentially harmful consequences of literary transmission. In his attempt to 'turn' past literary dreams to good by offering his poem as a curative agent, Chaucer cannot surmount the doubleness of literary endeavour, as potentially harmful as it is curative. Indeed, Christopher Baswell observes that Chaucer 'wrestles with the great problem of Virgilian authority in the face of competing versions and conflicting interpretations, and with his own ambitions toward authority'.⁷ Certainly, the dream form grants Chaucer some degree of latitude in his narration of the Troy material, and at one point his dream itself becomes the authority:

In suche words gan to pleyne	<i>complain</i>
Dydo of hir grete peyne,	
As me mette redely —	<i>As I dreamed</i>
Non other auctour alegge I.	<i>I cite no other author</i> (ll. 310–14)

Yet in the end, neither Geoffrey nor Chaucer can surmount the double nature of both dream and poem to potentially harm and heal.

Fame's troubled rendition of the Dido and Aeneas story represents and diagnoses a curious and unconventional sort of lovesickness. In contrast to courtly love maladies typically portrayed in medieval French dream visions and romances, replete with profuse weeping, melancholy, wasting, and protesta-

⁷ Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, p. 221.

tions of imminent death, the *House of Fame* implies that literature itself can be a potent carrier of malignancy. Geffrey simultaneously attempts to leverage literature, not love, as a primary antidote for such malignancy. In Book I, this shift is accomplished within the context of Dido and Aeneas, through which Chaucer explores the role literature plays in the defamation of historical women such as Dido,⁸ the propagation of unhealthy relations between the sexes, and perhaps also between Chaucer and his female audience.⁹ As we shall see, Chaucer uses medical language similarly in Books II and III to shift the focus of disease and cure from more conventional sources into the specific realm of literature itself. Chaucer thereby turns the convention of courtly love poetry by shifting the healing role from love to literature in general and the dream genre in particular.

Chaucer uses narrative techniques in the *House of Fame* to underscore this shift. By telling the story of Dido and Aeneas through the filter of Geffrey's dream while simultaneously casting it graphically on the walls of the temple of Venus, Chaucer remains twice removed from his source material. In the course of re-telling the Troy story — whether faithfully or otherwise — Chaucer employs two levels of 'translation': from dream to waking 'reality' and from image to word. These plays allow Chaucer to slip out of his own authorial role. Who, after all, is doing the telling, and what exactly is the story? Instead of providing a straightforward version of the Dido-Aeneas tale, the *House of Fame* narrates through dream images, and concludes by referencing the accounts of both Virgil in the *Aeneid* and Ovid in the *Heroides*. In the case of Geffrey's dream, the rhetorical device of ekphrasis evokes not the conventional sense of stasis but rather one of transformation, exposing variations and differences that exist in diverse literary accounts on key points relating to Dido's reputation, for example, or who is ultimately at fault for her death.¹⁰ Ekphrasis becomes a means through which Chaucer seeks to avoid — perhaps unsuccessfully — re-inscribing the social, cultural, and textual violence of the Dido-Aeneas tale. Given this context, the poem's opening statement regarding turning every dream to good might apply equally to Aeneas's dream, in which he is told to found the city Hesperia, to the entire dream vision that is the literary piece

⁸ A similar argument is made in Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*, pp. 87–107 and Desmond, *Reading Dido*.

⁹ This possibility is directly admitted by Chaucer in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.

¹⁰ A brief summary of additional perspectives on this aspect of the poem is provided in Ruggiers, 'Words into Images in Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*'.

entitled the *House of Fame*, and to the typically patriarchal dream of power, fame, and immortality sought by heroes and poets alike.

When Geffrey has finished looking at the images on the temple walls, he realizes he does not know who made them, or where he is. Leaving the temple, the naïve narrator finds himself in a field of sand devoid of all ‘creature | That ys yformed be Nature’ (ll. 489–90), and he prays that Christ will save him ‘fro fantome and illusion’ (l. 493). At this moment, he looks toward heaven, and sees an eagle: ‘Hyt was of gold, and shon so bryghte | That never sawe men such a syghte’ (ll. 503–04). While poetically serving to transition between Books I and II, this passage also serves to transition from the enclosed space of the temple to the open field. Upon exiting the temple, Geffrey sees two potent symbols, an eagle and the sun. Moving into the second book, the eagle acts as intermediary between the realms of body and mind, and earth and heaven. It is also a potential intermediary between pagan and Christian realms, but, as we shall see, this transition is not fully accomplished. In a pagan context and in the poem, the eagle is associated with Jove while in a Christian context the bird is associated with Christ and the Resurrection. Isidore of Seville explains that Christ is named as an eagle ‘because after his resurrection he returned to the stars.’¹¹ Likewise, the sun is associated with Apollo (whom Geffrey invokes at the opening of Book III) but also with Christ:

To describe the transfiguration of Christ, the evangelist can find no better simile than the sun: its brilliance and the whiteness of its light betoken His transition from the realm of the flesh to that of the spirit.¹²

A similar intertwining of pagan and Christian references and allusions characterizes much of the poem. This aspect of the dream-poem reflects the degree of difficulty inherent in the medieval poet’s task of *translatio studii*, a process involving profound historical and cultural differences including language and religion. As Rita Copeland argues,

To render text and commentary in a new or emergent literary language is to force an acknowledgment of the inevitability of historical difference within the project of *translatio studii*, to expose the internal contradiction of historical and cultural distance.¹³

¹¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 157. See also Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, p. 5.

¹² McDonald, ‘Christian Sun Symbols’, p. 32.

¹³ Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 107.

Although Geoffrey initially expresses his desire that every dream be turned to good, we are discovering how difficult that is in the case of his dream-poem.

As Book II unfolds, it literally enacts the dual potential of dreams and literature to both harm and heal. The book begins with the presence of the physical body; however, in contrast to the *Book of the Duchess*, it is the physical body of the dreamer himself. Soon ominous overtones of *raptus* appear,¹⁴ attending the eagle's capture of Geoffrey:

And with hys grymme pawes stronge,	<i>fierce strong claws</i>
Within hys sharpe nayles longe,	
Me, fleyng, in a swap he hente,	<i>In a stroke he seized me as I fled</i>
And with hys sours ayen up wente,	<i>his soaring</i>
Me caryng in his clawes starke.	<i>strong claws</i> (ll. 541–45)

Initially, the eagle appears not as a benign messenger mediating between heaven and earth but as a threatening force with unknown intent. Geoffrey's *raptus* accompanies a shift from the enclosed space of Venus's temple to the open air, and a sudden, forced, and almost violating shift from a physical, earthy plane to a mental, airy space. Whereas at the commencement of Book I Geoffrey invokes the god of sleep, as Book II opens the eagle insists that he 'Awake!' (ll. 556, 560). As a result of these sudden shifts we, along with Geoffrey, are left wondering whether the dream has taken a turn toward goodness and light or darkness and death as the scenario simultaneously introduces suggestions of both. In fact, near the end of his flight with the eagle, Geoffrey admits that he does not know whether he is alive or dead:

Y wot wel y am here,	
But wher in body or in gost	
I not, ywys, but God, thou wost.	<i>I know not, surely, but God you know</i>
	(ll. 980–82)

As he is carried skyward, Geoffrey apparently experiences a sort of physical death, as if his soul has been freed of the confines of physical form. Yet he finds himself not on the way to a Christian heaven but instead toward Fame. Disorientation and uncertainty continue as the eagle soars higher. Urging Geoffrey to wake up and stop being afraid, the eagle explains that the journey is for his own instruction, profit, amusement, and diversion and is a sort of compensation for his faithful service to Cupid and Venus through his writing. Yet this too is odd,

¹⁴ Christine M. Rose advances insightful commentary on rape and *raptus* as they function in Chaucer's texts. See Rose, 'Reading Chaucer Reading Rape'.

given that tragic tales of unfaithful lovers have dominated much of the poem so far. A sense of disorientation will only increase when we, along with Geoffrey, enter the haphazard world of Fame.

Largely due to the eagle's ensuing lecture on natural philosophy, intellectual concerns dominate Book II, replacing those of love and physicality that formed the focus of the first book. In its metaphorical application of medical and oneiric knowledge, Book I of the *House of Fame* attempts to heal the harmful effects of lovesickness and defamation. Moreover, the eagle parodies the Boethian healing potential of philosophy and, in doing so, picks up the thread of *translatio studii* that began with the Troy story in Book I. Indeed, the eagle is directly associated with philosophy through a quote: 'A thought may flee so hye | Wyth fetheres of Philosophye' (ll. 973–74). It is no accident that Chaucer completed his translation of *Boece* during the same period he composed the *House of Fame*. That Chaucer's own poetry incorporates and even mimics aspects of Boethius's work is generally acknowledged.¹⁵ For our purposes, we should note that *De consolacione Philosophiae* constitutes one of the foundational visionary texts of the Middle Ages, dates to the period between antique pagan and medieval Christian worlds, and features a clear connection between philosophy, the dream vision, and healing.

Boethius's vision of Lady Philosophy comes to him during a time of deep despair — of emotional and spiritual dis-ease¹⁶ more than an absence of physical health. Chaucer's translation of this work into Middle English preserves the medical language characterizing the figure of Lady Philosophy. She is, for example, referred to as Boethius's 'fisycien' and 'noryce' (I, pr3.4–6), and she tells the Muses of Poetry to 'suffreth this man to ben cured and heeled' by her own muses. To Boethius, she says that 'tyme is now [...] of medicine | more than of compleynte' (I, pr2. 1–2), and 'Yif thou abidest after helpe of thi leche, the byhoveth discover thy wownde' (I, pr4. 4–6). *Fame's* philosophical eagle, although surely less serious than Boethius's Lady Philosophy, purports to serve a similarly curative and instructive role for Geoffrey, but the consolation quickly turns comic,

¹⁵ See, for example, Jefferson, *Chaucer and the 'Consolation of Philosophy' of Boethius* and Elbow, *Oppositions in Chaucer*. With specific regard to Boethian influences and the *House of Fame* see Tisdale, 'The House of Fame: Virgilian Reason and Boethian Wisdom'; Bennett, *Chaucer's 'Book of Fame'*; and Leyerle, 'Chaucer's Windy Eagle'.

¹⁶ Use of the hyphen here draws attention to the etymology of the word: *dis* implies 'removal, aversion, negation, or reversal of action'; *ease* indicates primarily the 'means or ability to do something' or 'comfort, absence of pain or trouble', per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *dis-*, *prefix*, and s.v. *ease*, *n*.

even satiric, as Chaucer once again transforms literary and cultural precedent to his own use. In the end, the eagle provides experience, amusement, and a kind of carnival ride for Geoffrey, which bring a curative potential of their own.¹⁷

Chaucer also appropriates Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Dante's *Commedia* for his own purposes in the *House of Fame*. Dreams and philosophy, for example, are quite central to the *Somnium Scipionis*. During the course of Scipio's dream, his grandfather Africanus treats him to a tour while narrating on body and soul, stars and planets, rotating spheres and sweet sounds: many of the same topics addressed by *Fame's* eagle. Indeed, the eagle and his disciple Geoffrey act as comical versions of Africanus and Scipio, respectively. Like Africanus and Scipio, Geoffrey and the eagle 'discuss' philosophical and astrological matters, such that Book II of the *House of Fame* is Chaucer's own humorous version of the *Somnium Scipionis*. Simultaneously, *Fame's* eagle builds upon and transforms aspects of Dante's *Commedia*, another work in which dreams function quite centrally.¹⁸ Drawing directly from *Purgatorio* (IX. 25–30), which tells of the dreaming pilgrim being lifted into a sphere of fire by an eagle, *Fame's* eagle guide and his passenger Geoffrey are clear parodies of the Virgil-Dante relationship. By a strange stroke, narrator Geoffrey becomes aligned with Dante, just as the 'philosophical' eagle is an airborne version of Dante's underworld guide, the poet Virgil.

Yet whereas Virgil leads Dante down as a necessary part of his spiritual growth, the eagle carries Geoffrey up. On the way, Geoffrey wonders whether Jove will 'stellyfy' him:

Wher Joves wol me stellyfy,	<i>make me into a star</i>
Or what thing may this sygnifye?	
I neyther am Ennok, ne Elye,	<i>neither Enoch, nor Elijah</i>
Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede,	
That was ybor up, as men rede,	
To heven with daun Jupiter.	<i>Lord Jupiter</i> (ll. 586–91)

The word 'stellyfy' echoes the Italian *stella* with which each of Dante's three cantos concludes, but if Dante uses this word to symbolize his vision of the universe, its use in the *House of Fame* may suggest fame or some renown.

¹⁷ The relationship of recreation, literature, and healing is explored more fully in subsequent chapters.

¹⁸ Consider, for example, the three dreams of *Purgatorio*. For more on Dante and the *House of Fame*, see Steinberg, 'Chaucer in the Field of Cultural Production'. See also Schless, *Chaucer and Dante*.

Geffrey contrasts himself with biblical and mythological figures (Enoch, Elijah, Romulus, and Ganymede) who have been lifted up in some way and who are recorded in the pages of books. Although the eagle assures Geffrey that Jove does not intend to make a star of him just yet, the process of ascension in the talons of an eagle that ‘shon with fethres as of gold’ (l. 530) may give us pause. We have already been informed, regarding Aeneas’s betrayal of Dido, that ‘Hyt is not al gold that (l. 272),¹⁹ and we will soon discover that Fame’s house itself is ‘plated half a foote thikke | Of gold’ (ll. 1345–46). This context suggests that we should perhaps not follow the eagle’s authoritative guidance as Dante follows Virgil; rather, we should question it. This effect occurs not because the eagle’s lecture on natural philosophy contains incorrect information, but because he represents aspects of fame and authority that Chaucer wishes to warn against. In this manner, Chaucer questions the relationship between literary practice and fame/defamation. However, throughout this process Chaucer’s own poem becomes caught in the fate of its predecessors, unable to escape the double nature of literary practice.

Other elements in the poem underscore this point, including astrology. In the *House of Fame*, astrology is presented as a double-natured discipline, just as dreams, medicine, and literature are depicted as double-natured disciplines. Astrology is first introduced when the eagle draws attention to the stars by instructing Geffrey:

cast up thyn yë.
Se yonder, loo, the Galaxie,
Which men clepeth the Milky Wey. (ll. 935–37)

Alluding to Cicero’s account of Scipio’s dream (l. 16), these lines may also reveal Chaucer’s own astrological understanding. Working with the reference to December tenth, John Leyerle suggests that Chaucer was keenly aware of the astrological sky under which he composed the *House of Fame*. On that date, ‘as the sun moves through its annual path in the ecliptic, it approaches close to *Aquila*, the constellation of the eagle.’²⁰ For a medieval audience, the eagle’s knowledge of astrology would have been expected to accompany his knowledge of natural philosophy and logic, as all three were regularly a part of university curricula.²¹ In fact, these three disciplines — astrology, natural science,

¹⁹ Kruger, ‘Imagination and the Complex Movement of Chaucer’s “House of Fame”’, p. 125.

²⁰ Leyerle, ‘Chaucer’s Windy Eagle’, p. 249.

²¹ Kibre and Siraisi, ‘The Institutional Setting’, p. 135.

and logic — were 'most necessary' to the study of medicine during the Middle Ages.²² By granting the eagle a physician's knowledge, Chaucer reinforces the bird's comically curative role, first suggested by his parodic association with Boethius's 'physician', Lady Philosophy. The eagle's multiple identities render him a supreme figure for this dream-poem.

Moreover, because the eagle is both astrologically informed and at least partially associated with healing, he introduces to the *House of Fame* the concept of astrological medicine.²³ Astrology was 'essential to medicine in an age in which the reality of planetary influences upon human physiology and psychology was almost universally accepted'.²⁴ Astrology and medicine have long been co-disciplines, as S. J. Tester notes:

Medicine has always been astrology's oldest and most constant associate. Astrologers always regarded the doctor as their nearest point of comparison, because of the fundamental similarities of the two 'arts' — *artes*, that is, 'skills'. They had virtually begun together, in Greece, and their history was, from the astrologer's point of view, similar.²⁵

Clearly, the eagle's knowledge, position, and function within the *House of Fame* emphasize his potential healing role. During the ancient and medieval periods, both medicine and astrology operated by forming hypotheses based on experiential observation. Hence on one level, the *House of Fame* itself constitutes a literary exploration and interpretation of a healing process based on Geffrey's observation of Venus's temple, Fame's house, and his experiential airy flight.

Astrological medicine is also practised by the *Canterbury Tales's* physician pilgrim:

In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,	
To speke of phisik and of surgerye,	<i>To speak of medicine and surgery</i>
For he was grounded in astronomye.	<i>For he was learned in astronomy</i>
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel	<i>He kept his patient very many times</i>
In houres by his magyk natureel.	<i>In astronomical hours, by his science.</i>

²² According to 'Peter of Abano, (d. ca. 1316) professor of philosophy, astrology, and medicine at Padua', as cited in Kibre and Siraisi, 'The Institutional Setting', p. 135.

²³ Benson, 'The Astrological Medicine of Chaucer's Physician and Nicholas of Lynn's *Kalendarium*', argues that 'the Physician follows orthodox, educated opinion in his reliance on heavenly influences to treat his patients' (p. 62). For an interesting account of astrological medicine and prophecy, see French, 'Foretelling the Future'.

²⁴ Kibre and Siraisi, 'The Institutional Setting', p. 135.

²⁵ Tester, *A History of Western Astrology*, p. 222.

Though the Franklin protests that he does not know the correct astrological terms, Chaucer himself clearly does.

In addition to astrological images used in medicine, medieval definitions of the word 'yimage' could also denote a figure made for purposes of magic or divination, as Aurelius demonstrates. Not coincidentally, among those whom Geoffrey finds upon reaching the house of fame are wizards, magicians, witches, and sorceresses. Curiously, scholars are also included among this motley group:

Ther saugh I pleye jugelours,	<i>wizards playing</i>
Magiciens, and tregetours,	<i>jugglers</i>
And Phitonesses, charmeresses,	<i>Old witches</i>
Olde wicches, sorceresses,	
That use exorsisacions,	<i>exorcisms</i>
And eke these fumygacions;	<i>ritual fumigations</i>
And clerkes eke, which konne wel	
Al this magik naturel,	<i>astrology</i>
That craftily doon her ententes	
To make, in certeyn ascendentes,	
Yimages, lo thugh which magik	
To make a man ben hool or syk.	<i>healthy or sick</i> (ll. 1259–1270)

Mentioned at the end of a lengthy list of diviners, the scholars share a knowledge of astrology with the others. As a student in search of learning, the narrator Geoffrey himself qualifies as a scholar: he has, after all, just read a series of images telling of the Troy story and listened to a lecture on natural philosophy. More curious is the author Chaucer's necessary inclusion in the group, based on such works as *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* and the Franklin's Tale, which reveal his thorough knowledge of astrology, in addition to his careful dating of Geoffrey's dream in the *House of Fame* — essentially, the occurrence of the poem itself. It follows that Chaucer the poet is himself a type of artistic magician, a clerk with many books who creates images before the very eyes of his readers. Chaucer, then, joins the other clerks and magicians of fame's house who are capable of using astrology to effect health or illness. Such endeavour is not far from the medical astrology practised by the physician pilgrim. Chaucer, however, does not necessarily applaud this group to which he belongs: the tone used to list the ensuing great poets and historians of the Trojan War, including Homer and Geoffrey of Monmouth, is less celebratory and more cautionary — possibly even condemning. Wizards, physicians, and poets alike, the poem suggests, maintain the potential to both harm and heal.

From this perspective, the *House of Fame* is essentially the conjuration of a grand illusion — a dream image — in words, appearing out of nowhere as if

by magic. Within the broad dream-frame, we encounter Chaucer's many other exercises in the translation of image into word and vice versa, beginning with Venus's 'temple ymad of glas, | In which ther were moo ymages' (ll. 120–21). Soon, the eagle's wordy lecture translates the concept of sound into elegant spherical imagery. From the self-conscious literary perspective that is never permitted to drift entirely into the poem's margins, the second book translates imagination into experience. Geoffrey is rendered a member of the audience, as he joins us to listen well to the eagle's story: 'I wille | Tellen the a proper skille', the eagle proclaims, 'And a worthy demonstracion | In myn ymagynacion' (ll. 725–28). Transforming Geoffrey's position from narrator to audience member not only allows Chaucer to explore the nature of experience but to observe his own role as author within experience, and the contribution of imagination to that role.²⁷ The image-making faculty of both Chaucer and the eagle — their 'ymagynacion' — follows in the path of twelfth-century writers who 'elaborated a new poetry by the projection of Images formed in the Imagination'.²⁸ More specifically, Chaucer's use of image and imagination in the *House of Fame* illuminates the integral role the poet plays in the triangular relationship of stories, dreams, and medicine as they function both on an individual level and in a wider social sphere.

The imagistic nature of dreams, the ekphrasis of Book I, the presence of astrology throughout the poem beginning most obviously with reference to the exact date of Geoffrey's dream, and a conscious concern with medicine are all means through which Chaucer, poet turned would-be astrological healer, becomes aligned with a motley crew of quacks and magicians. By extension, the craft of poetry is aligned with astrological medicine, at least in part, which effectively forces the reader of the poem's dream images into the role of interpreter, who in a medical context would be physician or priest. Should we misinterpret, however, we play the potentially harmful expression of these roles. Just as dreams, histories, and stories maintain the potential to either heal or curse, the role of interpreter is equally potentially beneficial or damaging. As readers of Chaucer's *House of Fame* we play the role of interpreter.

The double potential of literary practice and dreams to both harm and heal is reinforced when Geoffrey invokes Apollo to guide the third book. Although Geoffrey calls him 'God of science and of lyght' (l. 1091), Apollo is also known as the god of poetry, music, healing, archery, and prophecy. The domains of

²⁷ Consider also Kruger, 'Imagination and the Complex Movement of Chaucer's "House of Fame"', p. 125.

²⁸ Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 26.

poetry, music, and healing make Apollo a particularly fitting object of invocation for Book III of the *House of Fame*. Indeed, Geoffrey asks him for help describing the house of fame and to make the poetry somewhat pleasing. As the book progresses, music is suddenly everywhere present as the sounds of harps, pipes, and flutes flow from its pages. While recreational pursuits such as literature and music are, according to Glending Olson,²⁹ potential forces for healing, whether the poem achieves this potential is not so clear. At some level, Geoffrey's invocation to Apollo at the beginning of Book III may echo the prayer issues at the opening of Book I; that is, it may express an overall wish to turn this dream, this poem, into good rather than the opposite. Yet the question of whether the poem achieves this end remains.

Soon after Geoffrey reaches the house of fame, as he discovers the castle gate wrought with images, sculptures, and carvings (ll. 1294–1304). This gate likely alludes to the two gates of sleep leaving the underworld featured in the *Aeneid*. The gate of horn offers an easy exit to 'true shades'; the other is of ivory, 'Without a flaw, and yet false dreams are sent | Through this one by the ghosts to the upper world' (vi.893–98).³⁰ Virgil's notion of dreams, in turn, was inspired by Homer, who in the *Odyssey* describes Penelope's dream world with two gates. This concept of twin sleep portals, one positive, one negative, deepened the dual perception of dreams during the Middle Ages. In the *House of Fame*, Chaucer adapts the idea for his own purposes. Just as Homer's Anchises leads his son and the Sibyl through the ivory gate, Chaucer's Geoffrey walks through the gate that gleams 'al with gold' (l. 1306) and leads into the materialistic, glittering world of fame. Through this gate false dreams of fame are sent, suggesting that the gate of sleep leading to a spiritual realm is not the gate of literary dreams and visions available to Virgil and Chaucer.³¹ Instead, the *House of Fame* implies that poets must negotiate the often conflicting forces and currents of history while accomplishing the difficult task of *translatio studii*. Despite Chaucer's attempts to render his dream-poem a curative force to transform past literary dreams to 'goode', he cannot surmount the potentially harmful aspect of history, dreams, or poetics.

²⁹ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*. The connection between literature and healing is more fully explored in later chapters.

³⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. by Fitzgerald, pp. 191–92.

³¹ Patrick Kragelund notes a similar interest in contemporary science and medicine on the part of Virgil, concluding that he incorporated philosophical, scientific, and medical considerations into the *Aeneid*. Virgil, as one of Chaucer's primary sources and Dante's guide in the *Commedia*, may well have supplied a model for Chaucer to follow on this point. See Kragelund, *Dream and Prediction in the 'Aeneid'*, p. 48.

In the *House of Fame*, Geoffrey's journey itself suggests the difficulty inherent in attempting to translate between past and present; pagan and Christian. Based on this journey — beginning in the temple of Venus, proceeding through the desert, and eventually ascending heaven-ward assisted by Jove's eagle messenger as guide — the poem charts a trajectory from the earth-bound to the airborne. This journey proceeds from the physical/love concerns of Book I to the intellectual, airy, philosophical space of Book II to a would-be heavenly realm of Book III.³² Conceived as such, the source of cure ought to be Christ, 'oure soules leche' (our soul's physician),³³ but any healing that occurs in the poem is incomplete at best: the eagle is associated with Jove, not Christ, and instead of the healing wisdom that characterizes Boethius's *Lady Philosophy*, he dispenses a lecture on natural philosophy. Finally, Geoffrey's journey leads not to a Christian heaven but to the strange realm of Fame.

In the end, any 'natural' progression is precluded by the unnatural figure of Fame. 'As thryve I', Fame herself tauntingly admits,

ye shal faylle!
 Good werkes shal yow noght availle
 To have of me good fame as now. (ll. 1615–17)

While the poem may be read as a counteragent for the negative — diseased — aspects of Fame, in the end it fails. A nightmarish quality that slowly begins to dominate the poem at this point indicates that Geoffrey's dream journey leads not to good, as the opening line states, but rather to an unnatural realm, lacking logic and justice and governed by Fame. What are we to make of Fame herself, a creature with so many eyes, ears, and tongues, covered in gems? Geoffrey says,

Y saugh, perpetually ystalled, *enthroned*
 A femynyne creature, *creature in woman's shape*
 that never formed by Nature
 Nas such another thing yseye. (ll. 1364–67)³⁴

³² To read the three books as a tour through the main realms of the human condition, physical, mental, and spiritual, is but one of many layered possibilities. In addition, the structure seems to mirror, or invert the three books of the *Commedia*, where the pilgrim Dante and his guide Virgil descend before ascending; here, Geoffrey ascends with the eagle to the House of Fame, and then descends to the House of Rumor.

³³ Pardoner's Tale, l. 916.

³⁴ Relevant to a consideration of the relationship between Fame and religious/spiritual aspects of the poem is the identification of apocalyptic elements in Boening, 'Chaucer's *House of Fame*, the Apocalypse, and Bede', and Boening, 'The Fragmentation of Visionary Iconography'.

Once again, sight and image are central here. A medieval 'ymage' was not only associated with astrology and magic, nor was it simply a representation made by painting or engraving, but it was also to be worshipped — an idol. When, at the end of his ascent, Geoffrey encounters the figure of Fame, the dream turns increasingly irrational. In contrast, having surveyed the temple of Venus in Book I, Geoffrey prays:

'A Lord', thoughte I, 'that madst us,
Yet sawgh I never such noblesse
Of ymages, ne such richesse,
As I saugh graven in this chirche.' (ll. 470–73)

In the pagan temple, Geoffrey's expressed devotion to the Christian God properly controls any impulse to idolatry; in the liminal space between earth and heaven, however, many souls have succumbed to the idolatrous worship of the goddess Fame. Through this contrast, the poem effectively warns against replacing worship of the Christian God with a pagan-like idolatry of the goddess Fame and those who are famous. Likewise, the work warns against worshipping images including literary creations and, by extension, their creators. Apparently Geoffrey already recognizes the dangers of fame and, when asked, he explains that he is visiting not for fame but for learning (ll. 1871–89).

Traces of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* show how Chaucer leverages his sources and his poetic duty of *translatio studii* to negotiate an indictment of fame. The striking image depicting columns of poets who support the house of fame poetically figures the close association between poets and fame. Just as the poem questions the pursuit of fame, it also questions the poet's relationship to fame within the process of cultural transmission. In part, the difficulties Chaucer encounters while attempting to turn every dream to good derive from his inability to separate his own poetics from predecessors, such as Ovid, who in turn wed their work to truth and fame. Ovid concludes the *Metamorphoses* Epilogue (xv. 871–79) with the words, 'If truth at all | Is stablished by poetic prophecy, | My fame shall live to all eternity.'³⁵ Writing in the wake of such statements, and all but literally standing on the shoulders of Ovid, how might Chaucer warn against fame? Confusing matters further, Ovid's sense and use of dreams in many ways buttress Chaucer's poem. 'In the Ovidian world,' Patricia Cox Miller observes, 'dreams do have "weight" by virtue of their ability to shift

³⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Melville, p. 379.

the grounds of perception and to give shape to emotion. Indeed, they *are* the shifting ground, mimicking the many forms of pluralized reality.³⁶

In the *House of Fame*, then, Chaucer applies an Ovidian conception of dreams and transformation to poetics — to the written act of cultural transmission — as he first attempts to salve the ills of literary love with his curative poem and then discovers the impossibility of his task. As a result, on one level the dream functions within the *House of Fame* at a crossroad of cultural knowledge involving a stunning breadth of intellectual disciplines, including Chaucer's classical and medieval literary sources, natural philosophy, astrology, religion, and medicine. On another level, the dream acts to destabilize the 'known', consequent to an early Christian view of dreams as 'liminal and ambiguous'.³⁷ The *House of Fame* exploits both of these aspects by literally embodying a type of pluralized reality through its use of the dream form.

Consequently, the poem can be read as a synthesis, however haphazard, of the major literary and theoretical authorities on dreams and visions. A close reading, however, reveals the extent to which Chaucer 'turns' — transforms or translates — these authorities oppositionally. In many cases, the poem completely inverts dream genre conventions. While the conventional dream vision is set during mid-spring, the *House of Fame* is set at the opposite time of year, in December. Just as Geoffrey embarks upon the act of story-telling, he somewhat absurdly invokes the god of sleep; similarly, just as he begins to recall his dream, he mentions Lethe (l. 71), the river of forgetfulness. While the dream genre was more traditionally used as a didactic tool by French poets such as Machaut and Guillaume de Lorris and Jeun de Meun,³⁸ this poem seeks change. These transformations of generic expectations and effects show the manner by which Chaucer attempts to 'turn' past history and literary narrative. On the broader canvas of the poem itself, a simultaneous engagement of literary memory and the impulse to forget or overwrite unfolds, as in the case of Dido.

Through Chaucer's incorporation of antecedent literary works, the dream emerges as a locus of accumulated knowledge leveraged to alter the very process of cultural transmission. Instead of fame and material reward, this dream-poem

³⁶ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, p. 24.

³⁷ Stroumsa, 'Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse', p. 195.

³⁸ It has been suggested that the French troubadours were influenced by Arabic literature, of which didacticism was a central function. The French dream visions on which Chaucer drew quite heavily combined didacticism and a stimulation of the imagination that was integral to erotic pleasure. It is possible to trace such influences in the *House of Fame*. See Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, p. 3.

seeks ethical transmission and presentation of knowledge — to turn dreams to good. The *House of Fame*, then, is less an agent of literary transmission through a simple re-telling than it is one of literary transformation through inverting and remaking past works, and the very work of literature itself. Similarly, the poem employs historical understandings of medicine and the dream to transform the practice of using literary and cultural knowledge for 'goode', or material gain and fame benefiting poets and their associated imperial powers. However, the natural consequences of Chaucer's poetic endeavour yield not change but perpetuation. In the process of writing the *House of Fame*, Chaucer effectively deposits directly within the pages of his English book the 'Egyptian gold' of literature, philosophy, science, and medicine that has been gathered from Greek, Roman, Arabic, French, and Italian shores. He cannot avoid his own involvement in the very aspects of cultural transmission, whether positive or negative, about which he writes.

Following the recognition that books themselves and the poets who author them are often sources, or sites, of cultural and literary 'disease' including fame,³⁹ Geoffrey laments the resultant cyclical harm and trouble:

But wel-away, the harm, the routhe, *alas; pity*
 That hath betyd for such untrouthe, *happened; faithlessness*
 As men may ofte in bokes rede,
 And al day sen hyt yet in dede,
 That for to thynken hyt, a tene is. *pain* (ll. 383–87)

Emerging clearly from the poem are the potentially harmful consequences of literary endeavour, including defamation, untruth, and misdirected veneration. Hence the title of Chaucer's work might refer to the poem itself, the place where Fame resides and through which it is maintained. In the case of hero Aeneas and the poets Virgil and Ovid who sing his glory, one might argue that the three men gain fame at Dido's expense, rendering her story particularly appropriate for exposing the harmful potential of fame and poetic enterprise. Ironically, by doing so the poem once again re-inscribes her defamation in the literary record. Seeking to cure, it cannot avoid harming, as the dream turns not to good but to nightmarish end without end.

* * *

³⁹ Summit, '*Troilus and Criseyde*', makes a similar claim regarding *Troilus and Criseyde*; specifically, that the poem is 'profoundly concerned with the problems of literary production — what it means to write fiction, to take a place in literary history, to aspire to literary immortality as well as to commit words to the uncertain media of manuscript culture' (pp. 213–14).

In many ways, the *House of Fame* and *Parliament of Fowls* function as a pair within the four-part sequence of Chaucer's dream-vision poems. While each of the two poems contains wondrous realms unique unto themselves, both are concerned with many of the same fundamental concepts, among them dreams, medicine, and literary enterprise. While each poem contains instances of disease and health, *Fame* ends by ultimately succumbing to the destructive forces against which both poems fight. As its double and opposite, the *Parliament* ends on a note of comedy and optimism, as the next chapter will show.

‘THE LYF SO SHORT,
THE CRAFT SO LONG TO LERNE’:
THE *PARLLAMENT OF FOWLS*

A phrasal pun opens Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* in the form of a translated version of the well-known expression *Ars longa, vita brevis*: 'The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne' (l. 1). A direct translation of the first aphorism of Hippocrates,¹ this opening line immediately sounds the theme of medicine, a theme that echoes throughout the poem. The narrator proceeds to complain of difficult attempts, of sharp conquering, of fearful and fleeting joy; and by all this, he finally admits, he refers not to the craft of medicine but rather to that of love.² Apparently, love has painfully dazed his consciousness:

Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
Astonyeth with his wonderful werkyng
So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke
Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke. *whether I float or sink*
(ll. 4-7)

¹ Hippocrates' first aphorism is as follows: 'Life is short, the Art long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgement difficult. The physician must be ready, not only to do his duty himself, but also to secure the co-operation of the patient, of the attendants and of externals.' *Hippocrates*, trans. by Jones and others, p. 99.

² The rhetorical technique employed in this opening passage has been well analysed. See, for example, Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules*, p. 26.

Coloured by a detached, gently self-mocking tone, this first stanza leads into the narrator's confession that he does not know love 'in dede' (l. 8), but rather through books alone. Reading and writing dominate the next dozen stanzas, all but replacing matters of both love and medicine. Thus self-conscious literary enterprise joins medicine and love as a third alternative subject referenced by the opening line.³ From our first acquaintance with it, then, the *Parliament* introduces us to the topics of medicine, love, and literary endeavour, inviting us to consider how they overlap and interrelate.

Previous studies of the *Parliament of Fowls* have either emphasized the poem's concern with love in its various forms⁴ or its dual focus on love and literary endeavour,⁵ but no study has yet explored the subject of medicine which, as the first line implies, is of central importance to the poem. The present study focuses on the role medicine plays in the *Parliament of Fowls*, arguing that the concept of medical oneirology serves to unite the main themes of medicine, love, and literary endeavour. Such unity derives from the poem's structure as well, which relates the narrator's Valentine dream along with the literary dream vision of the *Parliament*, so that both dream and dream-poem diagnose a disease that they simultaneously attempt to cure. Indeed, the poem investigates love, dreams, and literary endeavour as potential sources of both illness and healing. Chaucer's exploration of these themes, which began as early as the *Book of the Duchess*, carries through the *Parliament* and into later works.

Some critics have argued that the *Parliament* is an occasion poem concerning the betrothal of Richard II.⁶ Viewed as such, the poem can be understood as an investigation of what Louise O. Fradenburg terms 'aristocratic eroticism'.⁷ Yet this perspective alone fails to address the full scope of themes with which the poem is fundamentally concerned. Love seems at least as absent as it is present in each phase of the *Parliament*. Arguably, Love's absence forms the most immediate backdrop against which the literary and medical themes are played

³ A similar understanding is reached in Sklute, 'The Inconclusive Form of the "Parliament of Fowls"', p. 121.

⁴ Most notably Chaucer, *The Parlement of Foulys*, ed. by Brewer.

⁵ Including Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, pp. 307–08; Winny, *Chaucer's Dream-Poems*, p. 114; Dubs and Malarkey, 'The Frame of Chaucer's *Parlement*', p. 18; and Boitani, 'Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams', p. 48.

⁶ Baker, 'The *Parliament of Fowls*', provides a useful survey on this point.

⁷ Fradenburg, 'Spectacular Fictions', p. 494. To the extent that Fradenburg discusses the *Parliament's* treatment of politics and love in terms of the physical body, her remarks are relevant to my investigation of medicine in the poem.

out. On one level, the poem suggests that an absence of love yields illness rather than health; alienation rather than experiential participation; fragmentation rather than unity; and chaotic dissonance rather than harmony for characters, poet, poem, audience, and surrounding social sphere. Simply by writing about such matters, Chaucer's dream-poem would seem to offer a remedy through awareness; however, as we shall see, this endeavour is another example of an 'assay so hard' (attempt so difficult), given the forces against which it must fight.

Opening in a manner by no means straightforward, the poem becomes increasingly cryptic. Ambiguity defines the narrator's description concerning his knowledge of Love gained through books:

There rede I wel he wol be lord and syre; *master*
I dar nat seyn, his strokes been so sore, *blows are so painful*
But 'God save swich a lord!' — I can na moore. (ll. 12–14)

Mahmoud Manzalaoui suggests that these lines express the narrator's obeisance to the god of Love because he is too frightened to oppose him.⁸ I would suggest instead that the narrator admits he dare not say what he truly believes because Love's blows are so painful, yet neither can he continue to laud Love as do all the books he reads. In other words, the narrator is caught between suffering painful consequences for telling the truth and blindly continuing a tradition to which he may object. This reading requires some element of self-consciousness on Chaucer's part as one who reflects on his role within the poetic process. Given the overtly stated subject of love, his reflection can be seen extending into the production of medieval love poetry itself. Indeed, as Donald C. Baker claims, 'Chaucer was seriously concerned with the role of the secular poet of human love.'⁹

Following his remarks about the god of Love, the narrator addresses customs of pleasure and learning he has read about in books:

Of usage — what for lust and what for lore — *for pleasure and for learning*
On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde. (ll. 15–16)

As with the opening phrase, the main subject of these lines is obscure. We do not know whether the narrator has been reading about medicine, love, or literary endeavour. As a result, we may read 'Al this mene I by Love' with a degree of certainty just slightly greater than we may read, 'Al this mene I be literature' or

⁸ Manzalaoui, 'Ars longa, vita brevis'.

⁹ Baker, 'The Parliament of Fowls', p. 365.

even ‘Al this mene I be medicine’. At this point in the poem, the narrator poses a question that we may have begun to formulate ourselves; that is, ‘wherfore that I speke al this?’ (l. 17). By way of answering, he explains that not long ago, he had happened upon an old book and read it eagerly, ‘a certeyn thing to lerne’ (l. 21). This ‘certeyn thing’ is never fully disclosed, but he does tell us that the book is ‘Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun’ (31); that is, Cicero’s *Scipionis*. Once night robs him of light by which to read, he falls asleep to dream what will become the *Parliament of Fowls*. With regard to reading and dreaming, then, the *Parliament* narrator occupies a position similar to that of the *Duchess* narrator, who reads Ovid’s tale of Ceyx and Alcyone to remedy his insomnia. However, as we shall see, the *Parliament* narrator’s reading of Cicero through Macrobius does not necessarily serve a therapeutic role like the *Duchess* narrator’s reading of Ovid.

Touted by the narrator as addressing ‘hevene and helle | And erthe, and soules that therinne dwelle’ (ll. 32–33), Cicero’s *Somunium Scipionis* is concerned with a love less carnal and more communal, cosmic, and even spiritual. Yet any presence of spiritual love is all but eclipsed by the literary contexts and appropriations of the dream itself. In *De republica*, Cicero uses the dream and the afterlife to comment on and even motivate an individual’s proper behaviour in society. Macrobius uses Scipio’s dream as a platform from which to present encyclopaedic knowledge on a universal range of topics. In neither case is spiritual love of pivotal concern, a fact that might explain the narrator’s dissatisfaction as he prepares for bed:

And to my bed I gan me for to dresse,
Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse;
For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,
And ek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde. (ll. 88–91)

While the precise reference of these last two lines has caused much debate, it is certainly possible that the narrator laments having a book rather than love. Alternatively, it may be that the narrator desires to read of or experience a love less physical and more spiritual: not *cupiditas* but *caritas*. Carol Falvo Heffernan makes a similar point, suggesting that ‘the soul of Chaucer’s dreamer is in need of the curative as well as the fructifying aspects of the “welle of grace”’.¹⁰ Elsewhere, Ross G. Arthur has claimed that ‘the certainty which the narrator desires, without really knowing it, is not to be found in the science that men

¹⁰ Heffernan, ‘Wells and Streams in Three Chaucerian Gardens’, p. 341.

teach according to the light of human reason, but in the sacred science founded on the light of divine knowledge'.¹¹

While we cannot prove that the narrator yearns for spiritual love, neither can we prove that he yearns for experience or knowledge of carnal love. We do know that the dream-vision genre is rooted in Biblical literature and tends to 'juxtapose layers of reality' and 'narrate a spiritual ascent to higher truth'.¹² Chaucer's *Parliament* exploits every opportunity to play with these generic expectations. While the poem juxtaposes layers of reality, for example, it simultaneously exposes practical and social-political limitations blocking the very expression of spiritual truth. We also know, based on Affrican's later remarks, that the narrator is not one of Love's servants (159). Despite the initial attention granted it, love of any type is in many ways absent from most of the poem. We find this absence in the narrator's case, for whom books have replaced love; we see it in the parliament dominated more by cacophonous insults than whispered sweet nothings, and at the end of the poem we hear it in the formel's request to delay mating by a year for herself and the three tercels. Only at the end of the poem do we encounter happily paired birds and they are quickly replaced by the lonely narrator returning once again to his books. It is not love that is of central concern to this poem, but love's absence. Taking this idea further, A. C. Spearing wryly notes that the poem 'is one in which the lack of a unifying principle is experienced *as absence*'.¹³ Love's absence suggests more broadly that none of what passes for love is truly love; rather, it is the procreative impulse, or the desire for social power and prestige, or even hate. What passes for love can also include literary endeavour, with its hidden motivations and consequences such as fame, whether intended or otherwise. In the *Parliament*, then, lovesickness may itself be a symptom of the absence of 'true' love.¹⁴ Although for the narrator literature has replaced love, it has apparently not cured what ails him. Herein lies the difficulty facing Chaucer: reading and writing love poetry have not only failed to yield genuine love — however that may be defined — but may have caused further harm by perpetuating what passes for genuine love.

At this point, we may begin to see how medicine, literary endeavour, and love form several main threads of the poem. Many critical approaches to the *Parliament* identify love as its sole subject, which is not entirely accurate. Rather,

¹¹ Arthur, 'Chaucer's Use of *The Dream of Scipio* in *The Parliament of Fowls*', p. 34.

¹² Christine de Pizan, *Vision*, trans. by McLeod, p. xxii.

¹³ Spearing, 'Al This Mene I Be Love', p. 175.

¹⁴ For more on the topic of lovesickness, see Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.

the poem seeks to understand how each of these three themes — medicine, literary endeavour, and love — sounds in concert with one another. What are the proper relationships among love and poetry and social context? Can literary pursuits (writing and/or reading) function as curative agents? Does love have the potential to wound as well as heal? By exploring such questions through the *Parliament*, Chaucer ultimately explores his own role as a (love) poet in a broader social context of individual and social lovelessness. Serving this end, the poem never loses the triple focus with which it opens. Structurally, for example, it can be divided into three sections consisting of Scipio's dream, the garden, and the parliament.¹⁵ Alternatively, it breaks into two sections consisting of Scipio's dream and the narrator's dream, with the garden and parliament part of the latter. In many instances, both structural possibilities operate simultaneously. Triunes also appear in the three courting tercels, the three ages of humankind (youth, middle age, and old age) represented by various birds who attend the parliament,¹⁶ the Christian Trinity, and time (past, present, future). Many of these topics are addressed further below. Introducing another triple formulation, Hugh Bredin explains that the scholastic period 'was characterized by the desire, already emerging in the twelfth century, to construct a complete and systematic account of God, man and nature.'¹⁷ In many ways, the *Parliament* participates, even if ironically, in the attempt to construct such an account.

However, in the absence of love — of either a sacred or secular nature — the opening triple pun becomes a double reference, limited to medicine and literature. Oscillating between triple and double formulations in this manner is a key feature of the *Parliament*. Many studies recognize the poem's fundamental reliance on double formulations. Charles O. McDonald, for example, suggests that it surveys a spectrum of love experiences set up through contrasted pairs.¹⁸ Russell A. Peck observes that the 'plot follows the narrator's experience through a progression of juxtapositions as he moves between two poles,'¹⁹ while R. M. Lumiansky argues that 'Chaucer's unsuccessful search for a way of reconciling true and false felicity' forms the poem's main theme.²⁰ Following this lead, James Dean notes that 'doubleness is built into the word *parliament*, which

¹⁵ As suggested in Kelley, 'Antithesis as the Principle of Design in the *Parlement of Foules*', p. 61.

¹⁶ As noted in Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, p. 300.

¹⁷ Bredin, 'Medieval Art Theory', p. 36.

¹⁸ McDonald, 'An Interpretation of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*', p. 444.

¹⁹ Peck, 'Love, Politics, and Plot in the "Parlement of Foules"', p. 296.

²⁰ Lumiansky, 'Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*', p. 83.

in its original signification (*parle + ment*) connoted only a speaking together' but eventually 'came to mean the most solemn councils of all England, the site where statecraft was pursued'.²¹

Vividly capturing the extent to which Chaucer's literary dream vision is marked by duality is the image of the garden gate inscribed with two contradictory scripts. Other dualities in the poem include macro- and microcosm, secular and spiritual, mating pairs (male and female), body and soul, order and chaos, the possible classification of the narrator's dream as both *insomnium* and *oraculum*, the divine and fallen aspects of Venus, and Venus versus Nature.²² Readers of the *Parliament* have noted equally well that the poem comments on the 'duality of love'²³ and even 'the duality of life and, indeed, all earthly creation'.²⁴ Doubleness itself pervades medieval attitudes toward the dream, as Steven F. Kruger has recognized.²⁵ I would argue that the poem's double structure allows Chaucer to explore the role of dreams and literary endeavour as dual forces of corruption and reform — in medical terms, disease and cure. Following the inscriptions on the garden gate, the first part of the poem explores the curative potential of dreams and language while the second portion explores their pathogenic potential. But because the poem oscillates so fundamentally between any two given poles, the opposite of this statement is, in many ways, also true. The poem's double-triple structure disrupts or transcends simple dichotomies while providing a set of contrastive frames that allow Chaucer to explore the theme of doubleness itself.

Adding to the complexity and returning again to tri-partite structure, the poem also grants equal consideration to singularity. Consider, for example, the solitary formel who wishes to preserve that status for another year, the single birds who convene to find mates, and the lone dreamer, bereft of lover and, eventually, guide. Ultimately the two or three sections of the poem constitute a singular whole.²⁶ Taken together, Chaucer's play with 3-2-1 formulations signifies a consciousness of time — various combinations of past, present, future —

²¹ Dean, 'Artistic Conclusiveness in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*', p. 19.

²² These last three are addressed more fully in Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, pp. 319–21.

²³ Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules*, p. 26.

²⁴ McCall, 'The Harmony of Chaucer's *Parliament*', p. 27.

²⁵ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 17–34.

²⁶ Frank, 'Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*', pp. 530–39, argues that the poem's structural variety is in fact the agent of its unity.

that is important to the poem. To illustrate this point, let us attempt to locate the precise centre point of the poem.²⁷ Spearing, also curious to find the poem's centre, argues that 'The false lapwyng; ful of trecherye' (l. 347) occupies that space.²⁸ Yet dividing the poem's 699 lines equally leads us not to the middle of line 347, but rather to the middle of line 350 (349 and one-half lines), which is occupied by the 'orloge' (timepiece): 'The kok, that orloge is of thorpes lyte' (The cock, timepiece of small villages).²⁹ Given the thematic context, a centre occupied by a timepiece is perhaps just as compelling as one occupied by a lapwing. Yet if a bird is to emblemize the poem's centre, any of those present at the parliament are equally worthy in their own right. In fact, to choose one over the others would be to undermine the poem's commentary on choice and dissonant voices. The timepiece offers a more expansive range of implication.

Within this range, for example, we find that the poem constructs what Paul Strohm identifies as 'a social basis for ideas about time and narrative':³⁰ 'Time opens narrative form — even considered objectively *as* narrative form — to socially conditioned content.'³¹ Thomas L. Reed suggests that the poem exhibits an 'obsession with timeliness' that is expressed in condemnations of sloth, the formel pressured to make a quick decision, and the opening line that compares a task to the time available to complete it.³² Residing at the centre, the word 'orloge' calls our attention to such fundamental conflicts of literary time that are confronted throughout the poem. Further, Strohm explains that 'Christian ideas about time and the uses of time turn on a fundamental duality'.³³ Specifically, God's time is synchronous, immutable, extratemporal, while human time is successive, mutable, temporal. Occupying the centre space of the poem, *Parliament's* 'orloge' divides the poem in half; the first half, occupied by books, dreams, and the Edenic garden, is extratemporal, while the second half, occupied by social interactions, is temporal. Social time, however,

²⁷ This approach differs from that of Dorothy Bethurum who discusses the Garden of Love as the poem's spatial centre. See Bethurum, 'The Center of the *Parlement of Foules*'.

²⁸ Spearing, 'Al This Mene I Be Love', p. 174.

²⁹ Mechanical clocks first began to appear in the large cities of Europe in the early- to mid-fourteenth century, usually as towers. Chaucer most likely encountered them on his journeys to France and Italy.

³⁰ Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, p. 125.

³¹ Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, p. 112.

³² Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, p. 329.

³³ Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, p. 110.

is tripartite, comprised of past, present, and future, and one might identify the present moment as an ever-moving centre in relation to past and future. Simultaneously, the poem is loosely built on a frame of past-present-future: the *Somnium* incorporates literary works of the past, the narrator's dream occupies the present moment, and the formel delays the poem's most important decision for future resolution. Likewise, the poem's final lines return our attention to the future: 'I hope, ywis, to rede so som day' (l. 697). Looking through the hourglass of time, then, we more readily understand that the narrator is presently caught between two literary poles, one of past authority and the other of posterity. Just as the poem alternately moves through triple, double, and single formulations, so too it moves through past, present, and future.

Moreover, the poem is not only divided into patterns of two and three but also four, seven, and nine. David Chamberlain illustrates this point by exploring music as it intersects with numerology and Christianity in the poem. More specifically, he shows that the poem incorporates all four species of medieval music, and that each stanza contains a quatrain (abab) and a tercet (bcc) which together add to seven, a number of great significance to ancient and Christian thought.³⁴ He further identifies seven main sections of the poem that correspond to the seven chapters of the *Somnium Scipionis*.³⁵ Moreover, number lore — especially the number four — was important to early medicine: 'Greek philosophers accepted the four elements and attached a particular significance to the number 4.'³⁶ Like the elements, the four humours reflect this significance. The number nine is introduced with Chaucer's re-telling of the *Somnium*, which includes direct mention of the music of the nine spheres:

And after shewede he hym the nyne speres;	
And after that the melodye herde he	
That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,	<i>same spheres thrice three</i>
That welle is of musik and melodye	
In this world here, and cause of armonye.	<i>harmony (ll. 59–63)</i>

Rather than setting his poem to music like Guillaume de Machaut, Chaucer integrates music into the *Parliament of Fowls* in a derivative manner, by way of numerology and symbolism. The prevailing effect produced by the numerical range represented in the poem is arguably one of dissolution rather than

³⁴ Chamberlain, 'The Music of the Spheres and *The Parlement of Foules*', pp. 33 and 41.

³⁵ Chamberlain, 'The Music of the Spheres and *The Parlement of Foules*', p. 56.

³⁶ Cartwright, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 3.

unification. In other words, these aspects of the poem convey a sense of breaking up of the whole, or loss of unity. That is not to say harmony is altogether absent; rather, that it is largely eclipsed by discord, like the birds' parliamentary debate itself.

This loss of unity is, in medical terms, one of the more obvious symptoms that disease plagues the *Parliament*. Medical references play a role within the poem analogous to the roles of music and numerology. That is, using the medical motif, Chaucer suggests that the natural and social phenomena of love and literary endeavour are potential causes of both disease and its cure. To more fully appreciate the poem's metaphorical and thematic use of medicine, we must return briefly to the *Somnium Scipionis*. Like Cicero and Macrobius, Chaucer uses the *Somnium* as a foundation. If Cicero's version of the dream serves to explicate the welfare of the state, and if Macrobius amends to the dream a compilation of macrocosmic and psychological knowledge pertinent to a medieval audience, Chaucer employs Scipio's dream to comment on literary endeavour generally and his dream-vision sources in particular. For each of these authors, the dream operates as a function of larger political, social, and/or literary agenda.

From the narrator's somewhat selective re-telling of the *Somnium*, our attention is drawn to topics central to the *Parliament*. We glimpse, for example, the cosmological, metaphysical, and social concepts residing at the heart of the piece. The character Affrican tells us that those who contribute to the 'commune profyt' (l. 47) will enjoy an afterlife of bliss, while the lawbreakers and 'likerous folk' (l. 79) will whirl about the earth always in pain. After pointing out the earth and the nine spheres, Affrican warns Scipio 'That he ne shulde hym in the world delyte' (l. 66). Manifest in these points is a distinct concern for community welfare, abiding social laws, and a preference for the transcendent over the material. Reiterating his previous comments, Affrican instructs Scipio:

Know thyself first immortal,	
And loke ay besyly thow werche and wysse	<i>direct (yourself)</i>
To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse	
To comen swifly to that place deere	
That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere.	<i>bright souls (ll. 73–77)</i>

The concepts of a common good and the harmonious music of the spheres provide important links to the second half of the *Parliament*, both of which align with Chaucer's exploration of his own role as (love) poet within the broader social-political context. Likewise, the poem explores its own potential as possibly harmful and/or possibly curative with regard to the common good.

Chaucer's self-consciousness about his role as poet emerges most fully within the narrator's dream engendered by his reading of the *Somnium Scipionis* prior to falling asleep. By way of introducing this dream, the narrator offers the poem's only overt commentary on dreams:

The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,	
To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon;	<i>To the forest again</i>
The juge dremeth how his plees been sped;	<i>cases succeed</i>
The cartere dremeth how his cart is gon;	
The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his fon;	
The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;	<i>The sick person; barrel</i>
The lovee met he hath his lady wonne.	<i>won</i> (ll. 99–105)

Based on Claudian, Chaucer introduces several telling changes to this passage. In order, Claudian lists seven dreams experienced by the huntsman, the judge, the charioteer, the lover, the merchant, the miser, and those who are thirsty.³⁷ Chaucer maintains the number of seven dreamers, following Claudian's first three examples in order. He then diverges. Skipping the lover, he collapses the merchant and miser into a single reference to the rich and follows it with the knight. Next, he replaces the thirsty with the 'syke', which is the first direct reference to the topic of medicine since the opening line. Finally, the lover appears at the end of the list. Chaucer, that is, has altered and arranged the last two dreamers to correspond with two of the *Parliament's* opening themes: medicine and love. The third theme of literary endeavour is implied by the poet-narrator's own dream — of which all this is a part. Every example in the list provides a logical foundation for the narrator's conclusion about his own dream. That is, the reader dreams of his or her books, which explains the appearance of Affrican in the narrator's dream. The narrator's dream — which becomes the poem called the *Parliament of Fowls* — is the culminating example that all the other dreamers and dreams serve to explicate.

This oneiric catalogue is also significant in its presentation of the dream as a phenomenon caused by waking experience. According to the system devised by Petrus de Abano, such dreams are classified as *somnium animale* because they originate in the fluctuations of the waking mind.³⁸ The *Parliament* itself would seem to fall into this category, among others, since the narrator dreams about what he has read just before falling asleep. However, this categorization ignores the important role of the physical body; for example, the overtly physical

³⁷ Claudianus, *De IV consulate honorii*, ed. and trans. by Platnauer, pp. 3–10.

³⁸ Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, p. 207.

nature of hunting or illness in the production of dreams. Again, Greco-Arabic philosophers and physicians such as Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroës understood dreams as both psychological and physiological phenomena. 'Interest in the physiology of dreaming', Alison M. Peden explains, 'increased in the xii and xiii centuries because of the stimulus of new works of Aristotelian science, not that of the old authorities'.³⁹ Such old authorities may be among those 'old bokes' the narrator mentions, out of which 'Cometh al this newe science that men lere' (ll. 24–25). To the late Middle Ages, a body/mind-centred, medical perspective of dreams was indeed a new science, and one that challenged the Macrobian valuation of dreams as prophetic media alone.⁴⁰

Judging from the physicians listed in the General Prologue portrait of the physician and various oneiric commentaries throughout his works, Chaucer knew the dream works of this tradition. Incorporating a physiological- and psychological-based view of dreams, the *Parliament* takes a step beyond its literary predecessors. According to Cicero and Alanus, for example, dreams function as media through which divine guidance is received, although the prophetic nature of such guidance is not emphasized. According to the Macrobian system of classification, only prophetic (and hence true) dreams are sought and interpreted. Finally, the *Roman de la Rose* contains its own survey of dream theory voiced by none other than Nature herself.⁴¹ Concluding her lengthy report on the subject of dreams and visions, Nature proceeds to dismiss it entirely: 'Now for my part I do not wish to discuss the truth or falsehood of dreams, nor whether they should all be accepted or all rejected.'⁴² In addition, C. H. L. Bodenheim has suggested that the *Rose* authors may have been influenced by the medical views of those such as Aristotle and Avicenna. 'It is sad', he muses, 'that the otherwise excellent studies of contemporary science and the *Rose* by G. Paré leave medicine and the *scientiae naturales* quite out of the account.'⁴³ This same point applies equally to the work of Chaucer.

Within the *Parliament*, then, Chaucer clearly incorporates the dream poetry of his predecessors as well as medieval oneiric theory. By incorporating a medi-

³⁹ Peden, 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature', p. 60.

⁴⁰ Macrobius does acknowledge that nightmares are caused by mental or physical distress; however, precisely due to this fact he discounts them as unworthy divinatory means.

⁴¹ See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Horgan, pp. 282–85, ll. 18257–485.

⁴² See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Horgan, p. 285, ll. 18457–69.

⁴³ Bodenheim, 'The Nature of the Dream in Late Medieval French Literature', p. 82.

cal understanding of dreams, the poem attempts to recover a time in history which appreciated dreams as medical assets or indicators of health and tools of healing. Incidentally, the ancient Greeks are not alone in their belief and use of dreams for medical purposes. They are joined by the majority of traditional cultures around the world, from Peru and Siberia to Australia and the Americas. In these traditions, dreams are not only medically pertinent but often have relevance for those beyond the individual dreamer. Historically, that is, dreams have served communal purposes, including communal healing. Given that the connection between dreams and medicine transcends the boundaries of time and culture, the *Parliament's* use of dreams may in fact be accessing a deeply human and perhaps even instinctive use of dreams as a force for individual and communal health. Chaucer must reconcile this instinctive understanding with the cultural imprinting of the Christian church, which sought to repress and demonize those dreams that would threaten its authority.

As if recording this process, each of Chaucer's dream-poems presents a different treatment of dreams, medicine, and literary practice shifts. In the *Book of the Duchess*, the dream and poem serve most directly as therapeutic agents; in the *House of Fame*, the attempt to render the dream and poem as beneficial agents ultimately fails. Residing between these two extremes, the *Parliament* asks what happens when a poet dreams about the books he reads and then writes a poem about that dream. Are the effects of reading, dreaming, and writing potentially harmful or beneficial, particularly (in the case of the *Parliament*) where love is concerned? In this way, the *Parliament* interrelates the themes of medicine, love, and literary practice and leverages the dream to navigate among them.

After their initial introduction in the first few lines of the poem, these themes resurface with the invocation of 'Cytherea, thow blysful lady swete' (l. 113). Cytherea, or Venus, the narrator's choice of muse, accords perfectly with the experiential replacement of books for love, explained above, because the narrator invokes Cytherea not for an experience of love but rather to assist with his writing. This replacement — along with the relationships among love, dreams, and literature — are reiterated when Affrican appears in the narrator's dream. And while the narrator does not know how Love 'quiteth folk here hyre' (pays people their wage) (l. 9), Affrican rewards him with a dream visitation for his diligent reading of the *Somnium Scipionis*. That is, while the narrator does not know what rewards other people receive for their service to the god of Love, he receives a dream visit from a great literary figure for his 'service' of careful reading. Once again, the narrator's literary and oneiric experiences replace experiences of love.

Following his invocation of Cytherea the narrator recounts his dream, which begins with Affrican leading him to a gate at the entrance of a park walled in stone. Over the gate and on either half, ‘with lettres large iwroughte, | There were vers iwriten’ (ll. 124–25). On one side of the gate is written:

Thorgh me men gon into that blysfyl place
 Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
 There grene and lusty May shal evere endure.
 This is the wey to al good aventure.
 Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of-caste; *cast off your sorrow*
 Al open am I — passe in, and sped thee faste! *make haste!* (ll. 128–33)

Literally, the subject of this verse is the gate itself; metaphorically, ‘that blysfyl place’ refers to love, with sexual overtones. We may be initially persuaded to believe that the only subject here is love; however, the direct address to the reader — ‘Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of-caste’ — is an invitation to consider the book as a second subject. Finally, because the book we hold in our hands tells of a dream, oneiric considerations constitute a third possible subject. As with the first line of the poem, the gate inscription encodes a triple reference; here to love, literary pursuits, and the dream. As we might expect, medicine does not escape mention. As the gate proclaims, the garden is a place ‘Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure’ (l. 128). Reading on all levels, the gate, the book, and the dream simultaneously lie open, beckoning our entrance and promising opportunities for healing the heart.

Inscribed on the other half of the gate appears a contrary message proclaiming that the gate leads not to healing but to Disdayn, Daunger, and ‘mortal strokes of the spere’ (ll. 135–36). Barren fruit trees and dry streambeds evoke a landscape of death and sterility rather than natural fecundity. ‘Th’eschewing is only the remedye!’ (To avoid it is the only remedy!) (l. 140) the inscription warns, again employing medical language. Most frequently, this gateway has been interpreted as a symbolic rendering of the dual aspects of love: divine and carnal, for example, or courtly and communal. What has been frequently overlooked, however, is that the gate equally symbolizes the dual aspects of literary endeavour and dreams. Moreover, what has been entirely overlooked is the significance of the medical terms used in both inscriptions. The gate presents nothing less than the doubleness of love, dreams, and literature in terms of disease and cure. Medicine, then, becomes one of many motifs through which the poem explores dreams and poetry as either detrimental or beneficial media. Lovesickness is the most fitting malady through which to accomplish such exploration.

Chaucer has inherited the dream gate from his literary predecessors Virgil and Dante,⁴⁴ perhaps via Macrobius.⁴⁵ The *Aeneid* features two different gates of sleep, one made of horn through which true shades pass, and the other made of ivory through which false dreams are sent (VI. 893–98). Similarly, the gate to Hell in the *Inferno* bears words written in colours 'oscuro'⁴⁶ and leads to 'the suffering race | of souls who lost the good of intellect'.⁴⁷ Apparently combining these two sources, Chaucer follows Virgil by providing two gates, one positive and the other negative. Dante's influence is clearly present in the dark lettering that portends suffering and death. Chaucer's version embodies a coexistence of the singular and the double, as the solitary gate somehow leads to two distinct experiences and outcomes, if not two distinct places. It is before this gate that the narrator stands

Right as betwixen adamauntes two	<i>between two magnetic stones</i>
Of evene myght, a pece of yren set	<i>power; piece of iron set</i>
Ne hath no might to meve to ne fro —	<i>to move back or forth</i> (ll. 148–50)

This vivid image again recalls the doubleness that pervades the poem. Likewise, the narrator's reaction to the gate is not only double but visceral. One inscription increases his fear while the other emboldens his heart; in humoral terms, 'oon me hette, that other dide me colde' (l. 145). The narrator's use of scientific and medical knowledge to describe his emotional state reinforces the simultaneous dichotomy of harm and health that is contained within the poem more broadly. Faced with the promise of heaven and hell together, the narrator is understandably unable to decide whether 'was bet | To entre or leve' (ll. 152–53).

With a push, Affrican tells him that his error is written on his face, and that 'this writing' (l. 158) does not apply to him, but only to Love's servants. These reiterative references to writing continue to foreground literary matters. Effectively diagnosing the narrator's unconventional lovesickness, Affrican says, 'thow of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse, | As sek man hath of swete and byt-ternesse' (ll. 160–61). Rather than being sick with love for someone, Affrican surmises, the narrator is sick of love altogether. In keeping with the poem's earlier quality, the verse of this stanza is highly ambiguous. We do not know the

⁴⁴ Virgil is, in turn, likely indebted to Homer.

⁴⁵ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, pp. 91–92.

⁴⁶ Appropriately, this word embodies its sense, which ranges from 'unclear' to 'uncertain', 'dark', 'indefinable', and 'mysterious'. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Musa, *Inferno*, III. 10 (p. 89).

⁴⁷ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Mark Musa, *Inferno*, III. 17–18 (90).

narrator's error, or why he may have lost his taste for love.⁴⁸ Reinforcing the connections between and among disease, healing, love, and writing, Affrican tells the narrator, 'I shal the shewe mater of to wryte' (l. 168), at which point we enter the garden. We are invited to read the garden on multiple levels simultaneously, and I will explore several of these now.

To begin, we are presented with a rather lengthy list of trees. Curiously, this list identifies the trees by describing their human use rather than characteristics of their natural living state. Moreover, Chaucer is indebted to his literary predecessors Boccaccio and Ovid for many aspects of the tree descriptions. Having passed through the gate, we find ourselves not in a 'natural' garden, but rather in a highly constructed realm marked by human use and literary intervention. At this point we might well begin to cultivate some wariness regarding the natural integrity of this garden. This sense is reinforced in the next passage, which describes a green meadow, branches filled with blossoms, multi-coloured flowers, and a river full of small, lively fish. A close adaptation of Boccaccio's *Teseida* (VII. 51–56), this passage extends our journey into and through a literary construct — a book (or two or three) — not an actual garden.

Even bearing in mind that we are reading about this garden in the pages of a book, still we may be initially soothed by the experience. Birds sing harmoniously. Rabbits, deer and squirrels scamper about. So temperate is the air that there is never any discomfort of hot or cold (ll. 204–05). We may even experience some degree of the 'hele' and 'cure' promised by the gate. Healing plants that prevent illness and preserve youth grow in this garden: 'There wex ek every holsom spice and gras; | No man may there waxe sek ne old' (There grew every wholesome spice and herb; | No person could become sick or old there) (ll. 206–07). Soon, however, a darker tone begins to dominate with the appearance of Cupid (love) beside a well, his bow ready at his feet, 'Some for to sle, and some to wounde and kerve' (l. 217). Home to a temple whose walls are graced with 'many a bowe ibroke' (l. 282), the garden maintains an equally harmful potential. Here the narrator also finds the bitter goddess Jealousy as well as Daunger and Disdayn. George D. Economou identifies this temple as 'a place of thwarted, painful, and ultimately destructive love'.⁴⁹ One moment wel-

⁴⁸ In passing, it is interesting to note that the *raptus* charges of Cecilia Champaigne against Chaucer were released on 4 May 1380, directly within the time frame during which the *Parliament* was likely written. Such events in Chaucer's personal life perhaps inform instances in his writing, such as the complexity of the narrator's relationship to love in general, and his paralysis facing the gate leading into the garden of love in particular.

⁴⁹ Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, p. 137.

coming and the next ominous, we gradually begin to discover that the garden — as a representation of books and love — proves true both of the inscriptions on the gate that stands at its entrance.

A religious-based interpretation of the garden is also possible. Heffernan quotes from the *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum* of Honorius: ‘In the garden grow medicinal herbs and various flowers. The garden is the church in which many virtues of the saints are to be found, various kinds of herbs which are medicinal for the various wounds of sin.’⁵⁰ Original sin, stemming from the Fall, is the deepest wound from which the Christian individual and community suffer. As Mirko D. Grmek explains, disease also derives from the Fall:

Disease supposedly made its first appearance on earth immediately following the original sin and the loss of corporal immortality, in the wake of expulsion from the earthly paradise. After that fatal fall, disease became, so to speak, the normal state of the human race.⁵¹

Equally, the Fall forever altered the linguistic and sexual expression of human-kind, as recorded by written word in the Bible. Recognizing the wounds of sin — the wounds inflicted by the ‘master narrative’ of Christianity — the narrator attempts to remedy them through dreaming and writing. Yet according to this master narrative, with which medieval Europe was intimately bound, both writing and dreaming may be perceived as potentially dangerous, or harmful, agents that could work against the religious grain. Potentially either true or false, either divine or mundane, ‘dreams mirror a world that is itself double’.⁵² Likewise, on one hand ‘the word is God’, while on the other it is an agent of knowledge which returns us to the circumstances of the Fall. For the medieval world, then, dreams and words are forces of enormous power, capable of freeing and providing unction as well as wounding or re-opening mythic wounds — the dual potential symbolized by the garden and its gate.

As the *Parliament* progresses, we witness an explorative oscillation between contrastive pairs — sobriety and comedy, nature and society, health and disease, unity and discord — through which the poem literally realizes the gate inscriptions. In the garden two references to remedy, for example, counterbalance the harm that attends Cupid. First we encounter Ceres, ‘that doth of hunger boote’ (that provides the remedy for hunger) (l. 276). Next we encounter

⁵⁰ As quoted in Heffernan, ‘Wells and Streams in Three Chaucerian Gardens’, p. 341.

⁵¹ Grmek, ‘The Concept of Disease’, p. 257.

⁵² Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 34.

the goose who offers to 'remedie' the squabbles that have overtaken the parliament. While few would dispute the genuine remedy offered by Ceres in the form of food, many have echoed the sparrow hawk's response to the goose, 'Lo, swich it is to have a tonge loos!' (l. 570). This response once again suggests the ambiguous nature of language or speech. While the first half of the poem contains numerous such references to medicine and healing, they disappear in the second half of the poem. Similarly, the harmonious bird-song that greets our ears upon entering the garden is soon replaced by the fowls' arguments and many insults that create 'so huge a noyse' (l. 312). And while the first half of the poem investigates the source and perpetuation of healing, the second half looks into the source and perpetuation of disease, particularly as these relate to love and language-based endeavours such as speech and writing.

Set on Valentine's Day, Chaucer's poem ostensibly celebrates the process of choosing a mate, but does it depict love? At one point in the *Roman de la Rose*, love is defined as 'a mental illness afflicting two persons of opposite sex in close proximity who are both free agents'.⁵³ This definition traces to Ovid and, in many ways, is explored, realized, and satirized by Chaucer's fowl parliament. Much like the garden within it, the *Parliament* can be read as both perpetuating and seeking to cure such a mental affliction but also its absence. Further, the poem may both perpetuate and seek to cure the mental afflictions that plague the social contexts to which lovers and lonely narrators belong. Spearing observes that the *Parliament* narrator seeks 'the meaning of that love which is the major subject of medieval courtly poetry, but which he sees chiefly as a cause of suffering'.⁵⁴ The contentious debate produced by the birds reveals the darker potential of love, of organized political systems, and of hierarchical social systems to yield individual and collective affliction. In many ways, the bird debate questions free agency and pits natural desire against social class.

Yet the focus remains on Chaucer's own literary role within such contexts. Reading and writing and dreaming may have temporarily remedied the narrator's loneliness, just as they may one day help him 'to fare | the bet' (ll. 698–99). By incorporating such reflections on his function as poet within the natural and social worlds in which he lives and writes, Chaucer apparently follows Guillaume de Machaut's lead. As R. Barton Palmer argues, 'an element of Guillaume's individual approach to the writing of love poetry is the desire,

⁵³ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Horgan, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 90. For a comprehensive overview of lovesickness, see Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.

increasingly realized as his career progressed, to make authorship as much a theme as the game of love.⁵⁵ In many ways, the *Parliament* consciously builds on and transforms Guillaume's presentation of the relationships between and among Nature, Love, the poet, and literature.⁵⁶ In Guillaume's *Prologue*, Nature requests that poet-narrator Guillaume compose new poems about love. To Guillaume, Nature presents herself 'as the source of creative power in a Neoplatonic modeling of the universe'.⁵⁷ In contrast, Chaucer employs a narrative persona in the *Parliament* with whom he does not identify himself. Moreover, because Nature does not recruit the *Parliament* narrator to compose the poem, he must invoke his own muse. He chooses Cytherea, 'the powerful star of love'.⁵⁸ While Guillaume's poem serves to discover and exalt love, Chaucer's poem explores various types of love and whether each is constructive or destructive, harming or healing. The *Parliament* also explores love's absence and the extent to which language and literary practice may remedy that absence. It is equally concerned with the (love) poet's proper role within and contribution to the 'commune profyt' (l. 47). Through this essentially moral and philosophical concern,⁵⁹ we gain more insight into the relationship between the *Somnium* and the *Parliament*.

On the point of proper language use, Alanus also supplied Chaucer with much necessary material. Largely through the figure of Lady Nature in *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*), Alanus defines art as 'an ambiguous force, whose value depends both upon the state of mind of its creator and of its reader'.⁶⁰ In large part, Alanus's poem warns of the dangers and misuses attending language. Lady Nature, for example, describes the power she has granted to Venus, how Venus has lapsed, and 'the consequent violations done to verbal and sexual propriety in the world'.⁶¹ In a corrective attempt, Lady Nature doles out punishment to those who have misused language:

⁵⁵ Machaut, *The Fountain of Love*, ed. and trans. by Palmer, p. xlix. See also Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets*.

⁵⁶ Nieker, 'Apprehensive Moments', argues similarly that the *Parliament* exhibits a conscious and self-reflexive linguistic process.

⁵⁷ Machaut, *The Fountain of Love*, ed. and trans. by Palmer, p. xxiv.

⁵⁸ Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, p. 129.

⁵⁹ For a relevant exploration of poetry and philosophy, see McKeon, 'Poetry and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century'.

⁶⁰ Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 110.

⁶¹ The phrase is Kathleen Hewitt's. See Hewitt, "'Ther it was First'", p. 26.

Just as I decided to excommunicate from the schools of Venus certain practices of Grammar and Dialectic as inroads of the most ill-disposed enemy, so too I banned from the Cyprian's workshop the use of words by rhetors in metonymy which mother Rhetoric clasps to her ample bosom and breathes great beauty on her orations, lest, if she embark on too harsh a trope and transfer the predicate from its loudly protesting subject to something else, cleverness would turn into a blemish, refinement into boorishness, a figure of speech into a defect and excessive embellishment into disfigurement.⁶²

Here, the grammatical figure of Rhetoric is not only personified but gendered and even sexualized. Alanus frequently pairs grammar and sexuality, together with their proper use. For example, Jan Ziolkowski observes that in *De planctu Naturae* that 'the dreamer underlines his belief that homosexuality disturbs the laws of nature, just as solecism (that is, an unacceptable grammatical construction) infringes upon the laws of grammar'.⁶³ Moreover, noting that Lady Nature 'consistently describes man's unnatural sexual practices in terms of grammar', Maureen Quilligan concludes that Alanus is more concerned with language than sexuality.⁶⁴ Quilligan observes further that Alanus 'found grammar a particularly attractive metaphor because he was concerned to show that the corruption of language by irresponsible poets makes it impossible to conceive of the proper place of sexuality within the divinely ordered cosmos'.⁶⁵

In many respects, Chaucer's *Parliament* continues this particular thematic juxtaposition and balance of concern established by his predecessor. Chaucer begins the *Parliament* with a narrator who says he does not know of love. By incorporating the *Somnium Scipionis*, Chaucer introduces notions of the divine, the afterlife, and social responsibility while maintaining a continuity of dreams and literary precedent. More subtle is Chaucer's incorporation of the medical theme, which, within the given context, possibly traces to a definition of love similar to that provided in the *Roman de la Rose*. If love is illness, the *Parliament* reasons, then the language used to describe and perpetuate it is surely diseased as well, if only because it is post-lapsarian. Such implications, together with Affrican's stern instructions regarding the common profit, leave the narrator without clear direction. As a result, the *Parliament* searches — at least initially — for antidotes to the disease of love and diseased language in

⁶² Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans. by Sheridan, p. 162.

⁶³ Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Quilligan, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language', p. 171.

⁶⁵ Quilligan, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language', p. 172.

the interest of the common profit. Perhaps most importantly, the poem seeks to avoid reinscribing 'the limits placed upon our attitudes toward sexuality by a literary language of love.'⁶⁶ These diseases threaten not only individuals, but entire social bodies as well.

The *Parliament* in many ways avoids conforming to established conventions of love poetry. Rather than presenting us with a poet-lover, for example, the *Parliament* features a narrator-reader who confesses to not knowing about love. Likewise, rather than exhibiting the humility, courtesy, and adultery identified by C. S. Lewis as the hallmarks of courtly love, the absurd parliament devolves into egotistical and decidedly discourteous banter, followed by monogamous pairing or, in the case of our fair formel and her three suitors, abstinence. These features of the narrator's dream place it well outside the defined boundaries of courtly love poetry. However, the narrator seems to lack a clear idea as to what type of (love) poet he should be. An iron caught between two magnetic stones indeed, he is all but completely paralyzed in the face of his literary and communal duty as dictated by various forces such as Nature and *auctorite*.

To a substantial extent, this image of suspension between two opposing poles is emblematic for the poem as a whole, both internally and externally. We may read, for example, the two dreams featured in the *Parliament* as two figurative magnetic stones. While Scipio's dream is authoritative and instructive, the narrator's dream is plebian and chaotic. While Scipio's dream contains a cosmic perspective, the narrator's dream remains within strictly bound, enclosed spaces and ultimately observes the parochial, provincial world of the birds. While Scipio's dream speaks of social responsibility, moral behaviour, and an afterlife, the narrator's dream depicts social unrest, crude and selfish behaviours, and an absence of the sacred. The narrator is caught between these two vastly different oneiric landscapes. 'Chaucer's *sweven*', J. A. W. Bennett contends, 'stands in antithesis to Scipio's austere classical dream.'⁶⁷ Our narrator seems unable to reconcile one dream with the other. Meanwhile, we as readers are predisposed to understand the narrator's interpretive dilemma: if we wish to comprehend the poem, we must also attempt to reconcile the two dreams it features and may consequently face the same stalemate.

Because dream and book are grafted upon one another with the gate image, we are as caught between dreams as we are between literary worlds. Cicero occupies the first world, which is classical, authoritative, and instructive. Chaucer

⁶⁶ Quilligan, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the De-allegorization of Language', p. 177.

⁶⁷ Bennett, 'Some Second Thoughts on *The Parliament of Foules*', p. 136.

occupies the second literary space, and, like the *Parliament* narrator, he is confronted with the task of reconciling the authority of his predecessors and medieval literary theory with his own dream. Henry M. Leicester Jr makes a similar point: 'In trying to harmonize the materials of his dream with the traditional voices of his *auctores*, the poet constantly encounters the dissonance of those voices.'⁶⁸ Like the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament* shows the difficult task of inheriting and translating literary precedent. This difficulty is depicted poetically with the two gates, the figures of Cupid/Venus and Nature, and the concept of common profit. How, the poem asks, is one to apply the lessons recorded in literature — say, Affrican's lessons — to one's own world, where love, language, literary practice, and social interactions are apt to operate in vastly different ways?

Just as we are presented with two oneiric and literary worlds, the poem also explores the worlds of nature and culture. Love, for example, can be a force of nature or, alternatively, a function of art and language, as in the case of courtly love poetry. In the *Parliament*, the distinction between nature and culture becomes blurred with the figure of Lady Nature. The medieval poets, Lewis contends, understood the concept of Nature as personification; they 'believed from the outset that Nature was not everything. She was created.'⁶⁹ As depicted by Alanus, Nature is 'God's deputy, and her most important function in the *De planctu* is as a source of moral law'.⁷⁰ As such, Nature is a philosophical, cultural, and religious idea — a literary construct that signifies the world of human thought — more than the natural world of birds and bees. It is the relationship between these two realms — natural and cultural — that Chaucer's *Parliament* explores.⁷¹ Part of the poem's attempt to cure existing ailments in the areas of love and literary practice lies in its depiction of Nature. Much hinges on the interpretation of this depiction, particularly as it relates to love and morality. Economou, for example, argues that 'Chaucer's Nature directs sexual love in the way prescribed by her predecessor in the work of Alan. Procreation, which ensures continuity and plenitude, takes place within the marital state,'⁷² while Susan Schibanoff suggests that 'the poem represents a broadening of both sex-

⁶⁸ Leicester, 'The Harmony of Chaucer's "Parlement"', pp. 20–21.

⁶⁹ Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, p. 38.

⁷⁰ Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century*, p. 188.

⁷¹ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, in fact argues that the poem's main subject concerns 'the relation between nature and culture' (p. 100).

⁷² Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature*, p. 143.

ual and poetic norms'.⁷³ While the text supports a variety of interpretations, it is clear that the poem explores the interface between nature and culture.

More importantly, given the present focus, the poem seeks reconciliation through a discussion of literature in medical terms, an approach that traces at least to the *Consolation* of Boethius. In this germinal vision poem, the figure of Lady Philosophy passionately and unequivocally discounts the Muses of Poetry, proclaiming they have 'no medicine' to 'heal and cure'.⁷⁴ As a female counselor figure, Chaucer's Nature descends from Boethius's Lady Philosophy as well as Alanus's Lady Nature. Unlike Boethius's Philosophy, however, Chaucer's Nature does not summarily discount the ability of poetry to heal. The poem has, after all, provided comedy, recreation, and a pleasing roundel for its audience. Nature herself is a positive figure in the *Parliament*, her very presence in the garden serving to tame chaos into order and dissonance into harmony. Joan Cadden, in fact, remarks that the *Parliament* 'illustrates the late medieval view of moral and political good that arises from the benevolent rule of Nature'.⁷⁵ Mythically, the figure of Lady Nature represents a benevolent or curative force because she corrects the imbalances resulting from the fall that banished humankind from the garden. In many ways, then, the cultural element of the poem itself functions in a beneficial manner.

Yet the *Parliament*'s gate suggests that books are simultaneously potentially curative and potentially damaging, a possibility that is borne out in the subsequent portion of the poem. Reading, dreaming, and writing a Valentine poem have not provided the narrator with what he seeks, for example. This point is particularly significant if the narrator seeks love or a cure for his loneliness, though we cannot prove that he does so. Further, like Alanus, the *Parliament* questions simultaneously the moral integrity of language use and accepted practices associated with love and sexuality. Upon encountering the figure of Nature in the *Parliament*, we are forced to examine the differences between nature and cultural constructs such as morality and philosophy, and how they relate to one another, to literary practice, and to individual and communal health or disease. Like Alanus, Chaucer uses language and sexuality together to suggest that both are 'fallen' or, in medical terms, diseased. In its fallen state, language is not only unable to cure but actually perpetuates disease. While Alanus's Lady Nature directly admonishes improper expressions of love and the

⁷³ Schibanoff, *Chaucer's Queer Poetics*, p. 303.

⁷⁴ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Watts, p. 36.

⁷⁵ Cadden, 'Trouble in the Earthly Paradise', p. 208.

misuse of language, Chaucer's parliament comically shows the consequences of each. According to Kathleen Hewitt, the final section of the narrator's dream repeats 'the very process of Alanus's vision, with a lovers' holiday now the poetic occasion, several obstreperous eagles and a recalcitrant dreamer the misusers of language and the procreational imperative'.⁷⁶ Chaucer's parliament figuratively suggests many possible diseases that fallen language and sexuality perpetuate, among them social unrest, dissonant noise rather than the harmonious music of the spheres, self interest rather than concern for community, gender roles, and class ranks that dam the procreative flow of nature and choice.

The 'disease' of misinterpretation also poses a danger, to both text and audience, if not also narrator and author. Judith Ferster claims that Chaucer's *Parliament* 'responds to the moral concerns of medieval aesthetic theory by describing the dangers of self-interested interpretation'.⁷⁷ Because readers can impose their own will on a text, she argues, literary undertaking is inherently dangerous. Words once uttered or penned are Pandora's box opened: 'Once loosed, speech creates a *place*, a landscape that is infinitely varied and unpredictable', Michaela Paasche Grudin observes.⁷⁸ While 'eschewing' literary endeavour altogether may be the only true remedy for the possibly dangerous consequences, including misinterpretation, Chaucer chooses to write anyway. As a result, various features of his poetry can be best understood as 'attempts to distance himself from those of his works which he fears might have bad effects on his audience'.⁷⁹ According to Ferster, Chaucer

adopts two broad strategies for protecting his work and his audience from each other. One is that he counteracts the confusion between life and art by promoting readers' awareness of his work's artifice. His aim seems to be to make them conscious of the literary nature of their literary experiences. At the same time, although he insists that life and art are separate, he points out how human perceptions of them are similar.⁸⁰

It is also possible that the *Parliament* is a purposeful attempt to highlight similarities or erase differences between life and art, nature and culture, waking life and dreamtime. Recall, for example, the list of trees we encounter upon enter-

⁷⁶ Hewitt, "'Ther it was First'", p. 26.

⁷⁷ Ferster, 'Reading Nature', p. 190.

⁷⁸ Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse*, p. 52.

⁷⁹ Ferster, 'Reading Nature', p. 189. See also Ferster, *Chaucer on Interpretation*.

⁸⁰ Ferster, *Chaucer on Interpretation*.

ing the garden, as well as the birds who eventually 'give out not native wood-notes wild but a song patterned by human art: their *note*, or tune, is *maked* in France'.⁸¹ While this narrative technique may indeed be an attempt to protect text and audience from one another, it also serves to protect Chaucer the poet from critical judgement — from what Jennifer Summit identifies as 'the risks of meeting not acclaim but disapproval, misunderstanding, or blame'.⁸² In this way, the poem becomes both a source of harm and cure, or protection, for the poet. The dream form and the narrator also provide a buffer between Chaucer and critical judgement. Significantly, the narrator himself generally avoids making decisions, taking action, and speaking for himself. He seems a blameless observer of his dream more than an active participant in it. From this relatively safe vantage point, the poem is free to explore matters of social class, proper language use, and political assemblies.

Quilligan approaches the topic of (mis)interpretation by focusing on allegory and allegoresis, defining the latter term as 'textual commentary or discursive interpretation'.⁸³ Chaucer's unallegorical *Parliament*, she suggests, is particularly vulnerable to externally imposed interpretations because it lacks the built-in deconstruction of allegory. Given the double nature of the dream and Chaucer's dream-poem, we must explore the possibility that interpretation is a potentially curative force, while misinterpretation is a potentially harmful force. Because the harmful potential of misinterpretation extends to the broader social sphere, Chaucer would be ineffective in his duty as poet without ensuring the cooperation of his readers and the entire community. Just as Hippocrates recognized that the physician must secure the cooperation of the patient, the attendants and the externals,⁸⁴ in addition to executing his own duties, so too Chaucer seems to recognize that the poet must secure the cooperation of his readers and all others within the reach of his literary work. Pleasing the readership and powerful individuals within the community was perhaps more essential for the medieval poet than for modern authors.

Largely due to pressures deriving from patronage, reception, and interpretation, medieval literary endeavour was a deeply political act. Moreover, Paul A.

⁸¹ Bennett, 'Some Second Thoughts on *The Parliament of Foules*', p. 143.

⁸² Summit, '*Troilus and Criseyde*', p. 213. An imaginative rendition of such critical judgement is perhaps figured in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*'s god of Love who criticizes the poet's translation of the *Romance of the Rose* and for his portrait of Criseyde.

⁸³ Quilligan, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language', p. 163.

⁸⁴ Generally attributed to Hippocrates, *Aphorisms*, §1, aphorism 1.

Olson has noted that the European legislative process underwent a shift of perspective in the late medieval period. Specifically, the courts

began to look at the nature of political conduct less from the perspective of single, personal loyalty between men located in a divinely arranged hierarchy [...] and more from the perspective of how groups of people acting in essentially corporate bodies work out problems of loyalty, goals, conflict of interest, and organization.⁸⁵

It is possible, then, to read Chaucer's bird parliament as a satiric representation of this new understanding of political conduct. Further, the poem may suggest that the process is ineffective. More broadly,

Reliance on book-learning, experience, and the Imaginary vision in search for truth did not lead, as in Machaut or the *Queste del saint graal*, to a clear elucidation of that truth, but rather to the discovery that commonplace arguments, when assembled from diverse contexts, do not unify. They produce only contradictions.⁸⁶

That Chaucer's poem embodies and enacts this insight explains many of its features, from the alternation between double and triple formulations to the hesitant narrator and squabbling birds. Equally discernible from this perspective is Chaucer's concern with his role as poet within the surrounding social-political arena.

We might ask ourselves whether the *Parliament* proves Chaucer to be an effective poet, and if so, in what sense? As it is ironically figured in the poem, has the political process been effectively engaged to solve a poetically posed social dilemma? Has the poem proven to be a curative force for audience, narrator and/or the wider social sphere? Regarding this last question, which is most relevant to the present inquiry, the poem may cure to the extent that it offers recreation to the audience.⁸⁷ For the narrator, the final lines of the poem leave open the possibility that literature may one day prove beneficial to him:

I hope, ywis, to rede so som day	<i>indeed</i>
That I shal mete som thing for to fare	<i>dream something</i>
The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare.	<i>will not refrain</i> (ll. 697–99)

⁸⁵ Olson, 'The Parlement of Foules', pp. 53–54.

⁸⁶ Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 199.

⁸⁷ For more on the *Parliament* as recreation, see Reed, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution*, pp. 323–39. On medieval literature as recreation more generally, see Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*.

That the narrator returns immediately to his books upon waking from his dream is certainly significant. More significant is the connection he makes between reading and dreaming, and in turn between dreaming and improvement.

Regardless of any specific effect that the narrator's reading and dreaming have had on him, he recognizes dreaming as a necessary bridge between reading and healing. These lines in particular and the poem itself suggest further that for the dream-poet, writing the dream is an equally necessary bridge between reading and healing. We need not conclude, as Kathryn L. Lynch does, that 'the steps necessary to break the circle of reading followed by dreaming followed by reading remain unclear'⁸⁸ if we account for the written process and for the poem's intense self-reflexivity. Writing the dream not only breaks the circle but offers the hope of eventual melioration. By interlacing dreaming, writing, and reading in this manner, Chaucer explores the harmful and beneficial potential of literary practice. In contrast, Boethius's *Consolation* does not consciously account for the role dreaming or visioning play in this relationship.

We cannot doubt that Chaucer, like Hippocrates, was well aware of the treacherous experience and difficult judgement inherent to his craft, and yet he spent a lifetime mastering it. Along the way, he and his readers meet with hard attempts, sharp conquerings, and dreadful joys. If writing requires the use of fallen language, such use promises the only path to redemption. Words, books, reading, and writing are as much Chaucer's true loves as they are the medicine he offers to the world. At various points in the *Parliament*, Chaucer expresses this medicinal function in various ways. Through the dream, he recreates a divine space where play and work are one. He interacts with guides such as Affrican and Nature in order to communicate their wisdom. He envisions and then manifests unseen worlds, creatively reconfigures time and space, intends to contribute constructively to the communities of which he is a part, acknowledges the power of passion, and provides a taste of the joy that comes with being happily paired. When properly received, all of these gifts are restorative for self and society, providing healing of the finest sort.

⁸⁸ Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, p. 109.

LITERARY *LECHECRAFT*: CONTAGION AND CURE IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

When an outbreak of the Black Death descended upon Italy in 1510, Veronese doctor and astronomer Girolamo Fracastoro (c. 1478–1553) retreated to Incaffi and began writing a poem about disease. According to many modern medical historians, his *Syphilis sive morbus Gallicus* (*Syphilis, or the French disease*), finished in 1531, constitutes the first formulation of contagion and its mechanisms.¹ Especially in the years after the bacteriological revolution of the late nineteenth century, Fracastoro's 'seeds of disease' have been widely recognized as a precursor to modern germ theory.² Yet the 'seeds' concept had been expressed by many earlier thinkers including Marcus Varro (116–27 BC),³ Lucretius (d. 55 BC), Galen (c. AD 129–99) and Isidore of Seville (c. AD 560–636).⁴ Given the historical record, Vivian Nutton concludes that 'Fracastoro is sharing in a long-standing debate typical of the philosophical, scientific, and medical culture of both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance'.⁵ Building on Nutton's view, I suggest that Chaucer also participates in this long-standing debate in part by presenting a contagion-based model of disease transmission in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Since Chaucer's poetic model of contagion is inextricably tied to matters of language, prophecy, interpretation, and dreams,

¹ French, *Medicine Before Science*, pp. 165–66 and Eatough, *Fracastoro's Syphilis*, p. 3. Fracastoro later wrote the treatise *De contagione* (*On Contagion*) (1546).

² For more on this point, see Nutton, 'The Reception of Fracastoro's Theory of Contagion'.

³ See the section devoted to Varro in Adler, *Medical Firsts*, pp. 18–22.

⁴ Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease', provides a comprehensive survey of this topic.

⁵ Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease', p. 30.

the following investigation will explore how the work weaves these together with medicine and literary practice.

Critical discussion of disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has been limited, concerned primarily with lovesickness.⁶ Much of this work defines the phenomenon, contextualizes examples of lovesickness that occur in *Troilus* within antecedent works such as Ovid's *Remedia amoris* (*The Cure for Love*), and/or confirms that the lovesick symptoms of literary characters match those provided in contemporary medical texts. Yet at least two critics have begun to investigate the poem's representations of disease and cure more broadly, and these explorations are of particular relevance to the present study. Mary Frances Wack, for example, argues that Pandarus is 'a physician of lovesickness',⁷ while Sealy Gilles has claimed that Criseyde is 'constructed as inadvertently pathogenic, then as curative, and finally as deadly'.⁸ In contrast to both of these views, I argue here that Pandarus and language are presented as primary sources of contagion; that Criseyde, thereby infected, cannot and does not cure; and that Troilus's dream and Cassandra's interpretation of the dream function as primary sources of healing in the poem.

Various recent studies of *Troilus and Criseyde* have focused primarily on gender, language, and source materials, but allegorical readings of the poem have been largely ignored. While the poem as a whole does not function strictly as an allegory, it does contain allegorical features that can yield considerable insight, following D. W. Robertson's suggestion that 'Chaucer's characters are frequently reflections of a conceptual reality, and the actions of these characters are often more significant as developments in a conceptual realm than as imitations of external life in space and time'.⁹ The situation in *Troilus* is perhaps best described by James Dean, who suggests that Chaucer's 'characters and events sometimes shade into an allegorical mode without becoming allegory'.¹⁰ Indeed, an allegorical approach to *Troilus and Criseyde* is perhaps most justified by the structure of the poem itself, which depends on an abstract process of dou-

⁶ See Otten, 'The Love-Sickness of Troilus'. Also Heffernan, 'Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', and Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*, pp. 66–90. On lovesickness more generally, see Lowes, 'The Loveres Maladye of Hereos', and Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.

⁷ Wack, 'Pandarus, Poetry, and Healing', p. 128. A similar point is argued in Camargo, 'The Consolation of Pandarus'.

⁸ Gilles, 'Love and Disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', p. 185.

⁹ Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, p. 272.

¹⁰ Dean, 'Spiritual Allegory and Chaucer's Narrative Style: Three Test Cases', p. 274. Dean captures Chaucer's ambiguous use of allegory, claiming that 'The characters impart to their tales

ble signification. Doubleness in fact pervades the poem, from Troilus's 'double sorwe' (l. 1) to Diomedes's mention of 'double wordes slye' (v. 898) in defense of his own truthfulness. The poem's preoccupation with pairs and opposites rarely allows the reader to overlook the dichotomous at the ground level but double-ness is also introduced through symbolic representation or allegory.

The allegorical mode in *Troilus and Criseyde* is particularly important to the medical context of the poem, given the common ancient and medieval analogues between organism and society. In Aristotelian cosmology, 'the human microcosm mirrored the macrocosm',¹¹ a perspective that is clearly expressed in the poem's often-noted association of Troilus and Troy. Moreover, in many ways Chaucer uses his rendition of the Troy story as 'a cautionary tale for his nation',¹² commenting obliquely on late fourteenth century England. To speak pointedly of political ideas in physical and medical terms was not uncommon during the late Middle Ages. Sir John Fortescue (d. 1479), for example, in his work on legal theory entitled *De laudibus legem Anglie* (*In Praise of the Laws of England*), 'compared the mixture of blood and *pneuma*, "by which the body is maintained and quickened" to the will of the people, and the nerves, or motivating force, to the law'.¹³ Likewise, *Troilus and Criseyde* comments on the political arena through the diseased body of Troilus. In fact, the poem incorporates a second analogy — between war and disease — found in most branches of ancient thought. Classical tragedy, for example, regularly uses imagery of disease and cure to address social issues.¹⁴ Hippocrates employed metaphors of war when discussing disease, and in response Thucydides 'turned the tables by using the medical model of disease to explain political events'.¹⁵ In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer joins these precursors by incorporating war and disease into the mix of love and politics.¹⁶

an allegorical, even anagogic dimension, varying degrees of allegorical "other-speaking" that yet never attain the status of two-level allegory recognizable in Dante, Langland, or the *Pearl-poet*' (p. 275). Arguably, allegory is frequently an aspect of a majority of Chaucer's works, if at times it joins with other genres or operates just below the surface. For more on allegory in Chaucer's works, see Huppé and Robertson, *Fruyt and Chaf*; Strohm, 'The Allegory of "The Tale of Melibee"'; and Burrow, *Essays on Medieval Literature*.

¹¹ Jacquot, 'Medical Scholasticism', p. 233.

¹² Howard, *Chaucer: His Life, his Works, his World*, p. 346.

¹³ Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England*, p. 45.

¹⁴ King, *Greek and Roman Medicine*, p. 25.

¹⁵ Grmek, 'The Concept of Disease', p. 247.

¹⁶ During the medieval and early modern periods, medicine and medical analogies were

Chaucer further allegorizes the antique and medieval view of discourse as a 'living expression' of the social world and body politic.¹⁷ That is, Chaucer appropriates the organism-society and war-disease analogues to comment on his own literary practice. For example, while Troilus's illness literally corresponds to conventional medieval understandings of lovesickness, on an allegorical level it is itself symptomatic of political, moral, social, literary, and epistemological dis-ease¹⁸ in Troy and late medieval England. Chaucer employs lovesickness to reveal the 'seknesse' or corruption of the existing *status quo*, which comes to include that of medical knowledge and the medical profession as well.

This line of inquiry divides into three sections. First, I suggest that Chaucer allegorically presents a critique of contemporary medical knowledge through the figure of Troilus, simultaneously offering a contagion-based model of disease through the figure of Pandarus. Second, I explore how Chaucer interweaves medicine and literary themes, again using the figure of Pandarus, thereby engaging a bidirectional critique of language and the diseased state of contemporary medical knowledge. In particular, letters, language, and literature are presented in the poem as sources of contagion from which not the poet, nor his characters, not the narrator, nor his audience are immune.¹⁹ The final section considers dreams and prophecy, arguing that Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's dream provides the only source of healing in the poem.

Plagued Medical Authority

Medicine appears in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* primarily in connection with lovesickness, or *amor hereos*. A constant concern throughout the poem, direct references to lovesickness and its symptoms overwhelmingly concern Troilus, who burns with the 'fyr of love' (l. 436), thirsts the more he drinks (l. 406), and is wracked by 'a thousand sikes, hotter than the gleede' (a thousand

used in diverse genres (e.g., political tracts and drama) to speak of diverse topics (e.g., heresy and economics). See Moore, 'Heresy as Disease', and Harris, *Sick Economies*.

¹⁷ Eugene Vance expands on this point in Vance, *Mervelous Signals*, pp. 256–64.

¹⁸ Here, as in previous chapters, my approach to the concept of disease is broad and figurative, following the poetry itself. Disease, then, can be taken to mean a specific medical condition or disorder, a problem in society, harm, damage, injury, maltreatment, destruction, or (following the word's etymology) a lack of ease or comfort.

¹⁹ Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body*, has reached similar conclusions in his study of the *Canterbury Tales*, where he contends that Chaucer is 'the poet of infection' and 'the most infectious agent [...] is language itself' (pp. 2–3).

sighs, hotter than the fire) (iv. 337). ‘Allas, what is this wondrous maladie?’ he complains, ‘For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye’ (I. 419–20). Troilus’s symptoms — excessive heat and cold, sighs, and thirst — are consistent with the medieval humoral theory of disease generally and with lovesickness in particular. Medieval understandings of disease were heavily influenced by Greek medical authorities Hippocrates (c. 450–370 BC) and Galen, and the Middle Ages inherited Galen’s codification of Hippocratic humoral theory, according to which illness results from an imbalance in the four bodily humours, generally identified as blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The humours, in turn, correspond respectively to the four basic properties of hot, cold, moist, and dry.²⁰ Lovesickness as an aspect of humoral theory first became part of medical tradition in the works of Galen²¹ but likely also through Avicenna’s *Treatise on Love*.²²

Judging from Troilus’s symptoms, he suffers from an imbalance in blood and possibly phlegm as well. His copious tears in Books IV and V suggest that the yellow bile may also be out of balance. Yet to read lovesickness allegorically in *Troilus and Criseyde* suggests that while Troilus literally suffers from lovesickness, his malady simultaneously signals imbalance and infection within the broader socio-cultural contexts of the poem — Troy and England. From this perspective, the point is not that Troilus’s lovesickness corresponds to humoral theory or is expressed in humoral terms; rather, that the poem presents humoral understandings of medicine as part of the sinking ship that is Troilus and Troy.

According to humoral medicine as practised by medieval physicians, observation was the primary method of diagnosis. David D. Lindberg observes that, in the Middle Ages, ‘The ideal that governed learned medicine portrayed the physician as medical advisor, with a primary responsibility for what we would call preventive medicine.’²³ Yet not only did preventive measures fail millions of Black Death victims, but typical methods of observation, including urine analysis and pulse-taking, proved altogether deficient means of diagnosing and curing outbreaks of plague. ‘The arrival of the Black Death,’ Suzanne E. Hatt and James Hatt argue,

²⁰ Early works on humoralism do not uniformly agree on what constitutes a humour, nor on their properties. Presentation of humours often varies with author. See Temkin, *Galenism*. For more on Hippocrates and Galen, see Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, pp. 53–102 and 216–47.

²¹ Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.

²² Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, p. 77.

²³ Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science*, p. 333.

created problems for medical practitioners that they had never before had to face. It challenged all current theories of disease causation, and it threw into question the professional competence of medical practitioners and the efficacy of remedies which were traditionally prescribed.²⁴

Exposed to its own inadequate knowledge and authority by the Black Death, humoral theory simply could not explain, prevent, or cure the disease.

Consequently the plague opened an enormous rift between experience and authority. Personal, everyday observations of those living through the recurrent epidemics did not correspond to authoritative medical knowledge, as both medical practitioners and written medical works proved relatively worthless. Roger French argues that although 'it was clear — especially to the layman' that epidemics spread from person to person,²⁵ established medical knowledge did not and could not account for such transmission. Equally ineffective was the plague tractate, a genre of medical literature that arose during the mid-fourteenth century in response to the Black Death.²⁶ As the observations and recommendations typical of the genre were cast in the old Greco-Islamic mold, they too were largely ineffective. The crisis of authority affecting the field of medicine joined similar crises occurring in political and religious spheres throughout fourteenth-century Europe. And it is precisely this situation, I propose, to which Chaucer responds with his allegorical representation of disease in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Likely composed between 1382 and 1386, just thirty years after the Black Death ravaged Europe from 1346 to 1353 and during one of many subsequent outbreaks from 1379 to 1383, *Troilus and Criseyde* incorporates some recognition of the crisis in medical knowledge and authority that accompanied the plague. As if in response to the inability of accepted medical authorities to remedy the plague, *Troilus and Criseyde* explores an understanding of disease that privileges observational experience while indirectly challenging written medical authorities such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna — medical writers Chaucer likely knew well.²⁷

²⁴ Hatty and Hatty, *The Disordered Body*, pp. 163–64.

²⁵ French, *Medicine Before Science*, p. 158.

²⁶ Regarding the medical profession in the late Middle Ages, including considerations of medical ethics during the Black Death and plague tractates, see Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith*, pp. 289–304.

²⁷ Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*, pp. 89–90.

Moreover, issues of contagion may have been fresh in Chaucer's mind as he composed *Troilus and Criseyde* following his recent travels to Italy,²⁸ where political response to the Black Death recognized and dealt with its contagion. In 1348, for example, twenty-five years before Chaucer's visit to the city, Florence passed a law limiting 'corruption and infection in the air'.²⁹ Similar legislation continued into the fifteenth century, not only in Florence but also Venice, Genoa, and Milan. On Chaucer's second voyage to Italy in 1378, he was accompanied by Sir Edward Berkeley 'to discuss "certain business concerning the king's war" with Bernabò Visconti, lord of Milan'.³⁰ Just four years earlier, on 17 January 1374, Visconti had issued an edict in response to the Black Death with the goal of preserving 'his subjects "from the contagion of the disease"'.³¹ Surely then, Chaucer encountered these or similar high profile political responses to the epidemic while visiting Italy, responses that not only conveyed an understanding of the disease as fundamentally infectious but 'for the first time in history promulgated defensive laws against infectious diseases'.³²

While political officials dealt with the Black Death using legal measures, medical practitioners sought new understanding, and again, Italy led these endeavours.³³ In the meantime, however, the gap in medical knowledge revealed by the plague was temporarily filled by informal theories of contagion. Although Galenic humoralism was not seriously challenged until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and precise methods of contagion were not confirmed until the late nineteenth century, works such as Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Fracastoro's *Syphilis* explored unofficial explanations of disease as exogenous infection. These early poetic works begin to express an understanding of disease that is radically different from the prescriptions of ancient medical authorities, and they testify to the difficulties inherent to this task. Bereft of any modern scientific method or tools, Chaucer manages the difficulty by

²⁸ Many studies are devoted to Chaucer's travels to Italy, including some that believe Chaucer's first visit was to Milan in 1368 when he attended the wedding of Violante Visconti and Prince Lionel. See especially Braddy, 'New Documentary Evidence Concerning Chaucer's Mission to Lombardy'; Galway, 'Chaucer's Journeys in 1368', p. 183; *Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. by Crow and Olson; and Ruggiers, 'The Italian Influence on Chaucer'.

²⁹ Byrne, *The Black Death*, p. 110.

³⁰ *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, p. xxi.

³¹ Campbell, *The Black Death and Men of Learning*, pp. 118–19.

³² Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*, p. 355.

³³ Europe's first medical school began at Salerno, as early as the ninth century.

adopting a hybrid approach, throwing together models of contagion with more conventional humoral understandings of disease.³⁴

In the poetic context of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the conventional model of disease predictably resides with Troilus. In addition to his imbalanced humours, Troilus falls in love — or victim to lovesickness — according to ancient and medieval understandings. Indeed, he is first infected with love through his eyes: ‘with a look his herte wex a-ferre’ (I. 229). According to Aristotelian theory, the eyes were directly connected to the feeling-centre of the heart. In addition, thirteenth-century scholars were influenced by the Aristotelian and Arabic scientific ‘intromission’ theory, which held that the eye received rays from external objects.³⁵ Troilus, ‘ful unwar that Love hadde his dwellynge | Withinne the subtile stremes of hire yen’ (I. 304–05), expresses this idea. Soon, however, he is ‘with hire look thorough-shoten and thorough-darted’ (I. 325), and he immediately begins to display unmistakable symptoms of lovesickness as understood by humoral theory. In addition to sighs and burning fever, for example, his complexion changes regularly: ‘sexti tyme a day he loste his hewe’ (I. 441).

Troilus is infected with love through his eyes — following classical medical tradition and theories of lovesickness — but Criseyde, as we shall see, is infected through her contact with Pandarus. This difference allows Chaucer to explore a contagion-based model of disease transmission. Indeed, with the entrance of Pandarus we are introduced to what is perhaps the most prominent model of contagion in the poem. Early in Book I, Pandarus enters Troilus’s chamber ‘unwar’ (unexpectedly) (I. 549). His stealthy arrival foreshadows Pandarus’s prying manipulations that begin in this scene and continue throughout the poem. Indeed, considering the allegorical association between Troilus’s private body and the public body of Troy, the uninvited near-trespass of Pandarus foreshadows Troilus’s eventual death and Troy’s imminent demise in the form of a

³⁴ Also likely accounting for the poem’s hybrid approach to disease transmission was the slow development ‘of an artistic vocabulary by which to describe the plague’, according to Friedman, ‘He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence’, p. 75, referenced by Butterfield, ‘Pastoral and the Politics of Plague in Machaut and Chaucer’, p. 22.

³⁵ Intromission theory operates in the works of Andreas Capellanus, Roger Bacon and Machaut. See Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*, which addresses both the ancient world and later Middle Ages. Also see Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love*, pp. 27–49 and Sarah Stanbury’s consideration of the gaze and medieval optical science in Stanbury, ‘The Lover’s Gaze in *Troilus and Criseyde*’. Newman, ‘St. Augustine’s Three Visions and the Structure of the *Commedia*’, makes excellent application of Augustine’s theories of vision.

Trojan horse that invades city walls. Read allegorically, then, Pandarus is figured as a source of contagion and transmission — a pathogen of love. It should be noted that Chaucer's portrayal of Pandarus as an agent of disease transmission differs notably from the Hippocratic concept of miasma. Tracing to the Greek word for pollution or polluting agent, miasma was understood as 'bad air' that propagated disease through a variety of conjectural causes (causes were often described through comparison, e.g. to dyeing cloth or the effects of poisons).³⁶ In contrast, Chaucer's Pandarus is himself the transmitting agent who carries lovesickness directly from Troilus to Criseyde. Chaucer's model of contagion allegorized in Pandarus emphasizes an etiology of 'person-to-person' contact, as does post-bacteriological science.

Ironically, Pandarus expends endless breath in an attempt to fashion himself as a cure for Troilus. He repeats this desire often during their initial conversation in Troilus's chamber as he tries to cajole his companion into talking: 'telle me al thi wo' (I. 830), he says, adding that if he hasn't provided relief before too long, have him drawn to pieces and hung (I. 831–33). Yet despite his professed intentions to cure, Pandarus succeeds only in worsening Troilus's ailment:

Whan Troilus hadde herd Pandare assented *that Pandarus agreed*
 To ben his help in loving of Cryseyde, *To assist him*
 Weex of his wo, as who seith, untormented, *He became untormented*
 But hotter weex his love. (I. 1009–12)

Although Pandarus's involvement temporarily mitigates Troilus's tormenting sadness, it increases the heat of his love. Pandarus has essentially fanned the fire, or re-exposed the infirm to disease. Similar results follow Pandarus's suggestion that Troilus write letters to Criseyde. Receiving her written reply, Pandarus tells Troilus to rise and see 'A charme that was sent right now to the, | The which kan helen the of thyn accesse' (A charm that was sent to you right now, | That can heal your fever) (II. 1314–15). Far from healing Troilus's fever, however, Criseyde's letter 'encrescen gan desir, of which he brente' (II. 1337).

This Troilus gan to desiren moore
 Thanne he did erst, thorough hope,
 and did his myght *initially; he exerted his effort*
 To pressen on, as by Pandarus lore, *according to Pandarus's advice*
 And writen to hire of his sorwes soore. (II. 1339–42)

³⁶ For more on miasma, see Parker, *Miasma*. For more on medieval perceptions of contagion, see Henderson, 'The Black Death in Florence'.

Likewise, the night shared by the two lovers, arranged by Pandarus, only temporarily ‘cures’ Troilus, whom we soon find suffering from a serious case of insomnia:

But slep ne may ther in his herte synke, *sleep would not*
 Thynkyng how she for whom desire hym brende
 A thousand fold was worth more than he wende. *had thought* (III. 1538–40)

All the ‘curative’ measures Pandarus recommends and facilitates only serve to worsen Troilus’s illness, which locates Pandarus not as a source of healing, but rather as a source of disease.

Pandarus, of course, has every reason to be concerned about his friend. According to medieval physicians, if victims of *amor hereos* are not cured, the prognosis is mania or death.³⁷ Yet despite following conventional prescriptions for curing lovesickness, including conversation and therapeutic intercourse,³⁸ Pandarus fails to cure Troilus. This fact points not to Pandarus as a some sort of quack doctor but rather to the general failure of humoral medicine. Pandarus plays a double role, however. While on one hand he fails to cure Troilus, on the other he infects Criseyde with lovesickness through direct contact.

Criseyde’s downward spiral from health to disease is particularly evident because she is described as ‘somdel deignous’ (somewhat haughty) (I. 290) and bright when she first appears in the poem. We next find her reading in the garden with her companions, which she interrupts to laughingly greet her visiting uncle. During the conversation that follows, Pandarus exposes Criseyde to her first dose of disease as he conjures up suicide should she allow Troilus to ‘die’:

But if ye late hym deyen, I wol sterve —
 Have here my trouthe, nece, I nyl nat lyen —
 Al sholde I with this knyf my throte kerve. *Even if I should; my throat cut*
 (II. 323–25)

Understandably, Pandarus’s visit precipitates Criseyde’s brooding moral evaluation and her eagle dream. At this point, however, Criseyde is still her ‘owene woman, wel at ese’ (II. 750). Only after Pandarus’s ominous message does she spy Troilus from her window, asking ‘Who yaf me drynke?’ (II. 651), underscoring the different means through which she and Troilus are initially infected.³⁹

³⁷ Heffernan, *The Melancholy Muse*, p. 70.

³⁸ Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, p. 41.

³⁹ The question indicates a change in Criseyde toward, rather than away from, lovesickness. Consequently, though wine is among the noted cures for lovesickness, the drink referenced here

Though the illness does not overtake her as quickly as it does Troilus, she cannot escape the contagion.

Like Pandarus, Criseyde is ostensibly invested with curative power, identified as Troilus's 'lif, and from the deth his cure' (I. 469). He says he will lose his health, complexion, and life if she doesn't have pity on him (I. 461–62). Even she, at one point, thinks, 'Best koud I yet ben his leche' (Yet I could be his best doctor) (II. 1582). When Criseyde eventually meets with Troilus, she does attempt to heal him, but not without contingency:

As I wel mene, ek menen wel to me,
 And myn honour with wit and bisynesse
 Ay kepe; and if I may don hym gladnesse, *bring him joy*
 From hennesforth, iwys, I nyl nought feyne. *will hold nothing back*
 Now beth al hool; no lenger ye ne pleyne. *fully recovered* (III. 164–68)

Criseyde agrees to help Troilus toward recovery if he in turn agrees to respect her honour. With that, she tells him to be well and stop complaining. Criseyde's healing ministrations are continually sought as the poem progresses. Although the night the two spend together temporarily eases Troilus's condition, he does not recover. As late as Book v, Troilus writes to Criseyde confessing that he will have no health unless she gives it to him; that she may command him to life or death; that she alone can save him 'fro disese of alle peynes smerte' (v. 1420). In response Criseyde writes,

I herteles, I sik, I in destresse!
 Syn ye with me, nor I with yow, may dele, *cannot be with me*
 Yow neyther send ich herte may nor hele. *I can send you neither* (v. 1594–96)

In the end, despite all identification to the contrary, Criseyde does not and cannot cure Troilus. According to Charlotte F. Otten, this is in part because his love is not for her. Rather it is 'an egocentric love, a love that eats away at the Lover'.⁴⁰ In this way Chaucer's implied critique of humoral theory using lovesickness as exemplar simultaneously critiques courtly love, where women are supposedly capable of healing lovesick men.⁴¹

is not curative. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, details the causes and cures of lovesickness in various sections of her work.

⁴⁰ Otten, 'The Love-Sickness of Troilus', p. 27.

⁴¹ Traces of courtly love are evident in *The House of Fame*, *The Book of the Duchess*, and *The Legend of Good Women*. Fish, 'The Origin and Original Object of "Troilus and Criseyde"', notes a similar critique in *Troilus*.

Not only is Criseyde ultimately unable to cure Troilus, but, like Pandarus, Troilus soon becomes an agent of contagion. To the extent that Criseyde on several occasions temporarily mitigates Troilus's woe, she becomes infected with illness in equal measure. This exchange is most readily evident as the two embrace prior to their night together. Having just forgiven Troilus and asked for his forgiveness in return, Criseyde momentarily appears to be herself. That is, until Troilus suddenly takes her in his arms: 'Right as an aspes leef she gan to quake, | Whan she hym felte hire in his armes folde' (III. 1200–01). Criseyde begins to tremble as if with cold or fear as Troilus takes her in his arms; in contrast, he has suddenly recovered: 'But Troilus, al hool of cares colde, | Gan thanken tho the bryghte goodes sevene' (But Troilus, all recovered from painful sorrows, | Began to thank the seven planets) (III. 1202–03). To the extent that Troilus is cured, Criseyde is infected: 'Now yeldeth yow', Troilus taunts, 'for other bote is non!' (III. 1208). By answering that she would not be there if she had not already yielded, Criseyde again momentarily reclaims her agency, showing that she is not yet entirely overtaken with illness.⁴² But once she learns of her impending transfer to the Greek camp, she admits her ever-worsening condition: 'Felyng alwey from wikke I go to worse' (I go from feeling bad to worse) (IV. 840). Indeed, at this point she has become so utterly infected that she identifies her own body and self with disease:⁴³

Whoso me seeth, he seeth sorwe al atonys — *all at once*
 Peyne, torment, pleynte, wo, distress! *lamentation*
 Out of my woful body harm ther noon is,
 As angwissh, languor, cruel bitternesse,
 Anoy, smert, drede, fury, and ek siknesse. *Trouble, pain* (IV. 841–45)

Once perfectly healthy, Criseyde's condition steadily declines as her proximity to and interaction with Pandarus and Troilus increase. Her remark to Troilus as she prepares to ride away, 'There is no other remedie in this cas' (v. 60), is apparently quite true.

Yet Criseyde survives. Having contracted a contagious disease from an infected patriarchy,⁴⁴ Criseyde survives by leaving the pathogenic source and

⁴² Gallacher, 'Chaucer and the Rhetoric of the Body', reads this scene in terms of the body, claiming that Criseyde reacts as she does because she 'perceives herself as an object' (p. 223).

⁴³ As observed in Gilles, 'Love and Disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', pp. 157–58.

⁴⁴ Margherita, 'Originary Fantasies and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', states that Chaucer's poetry 'reveals the instability at the heart of a paternalist poetics, and thus the fragility of any historicity or nationalist ideology based on a patrilineal system of inheritance' (p. 135).

site. Troilus and Troy, by contrast, meet their demise in part because they operate according to paradigms — including those of courtly love and humoral medicine — that are no longer viable. Through ‘Troilus, the syke’ (II. 1572), along with Pandarus and Criseyde, then, Chaucer’s poem begins to explore the transition from a humoral-based understanding of disease to a contagion-based one.

Letters, Language, Poetics

Chaucer, as we have seen, capitalizes on Troilus’s lovesickness to invoke contemporary medical authority and present a literary model of contagion-based disease transmission. It is time now to explore how Chaucer interrelates disease and literary practice using letters, language, and literature as specific agents of disease and contagion. Pandarus is associated with language throughout the poem. This association is perhaps most clearly evident in his nonstop chattering. In many ways, he can be read as an allegorical portrait of rhetoric,⁴⁵ just as he can be read as an allegorical portrait of contagion. A persuasive and at times duplicitous mediator, Pandarus relies heavily on the careful use of language to woo his niece on Troilus’s behalf. When, for example, Criseyde seeks information about Troilus by asking her uncle, ‘Kan he wel speke of love?’ (II. 503), Pandarus cleverly avoids the question, first with tangential information — specifically, that he and Troilus had recently spent half a day discussing a plan for fending off the Greeks — and then with an obscure excuse:

But now to yow rehercen al his speche,	<i>tell everything he said</i>
Or all his woful wordes for to sowne,	<i>to repeat</i>
Ne bid me naught, but ye wol se me swowne.	<i>Unless you wish to see me swoon</i>
	(II. 572–74)

In effect, Pandarus’s circumlocutory reply substitutes for Troilus’s own possible swoon, his own wooing, and his very presence.

Pandarus’s strategic letter-writing advice to Troilus further demonstrates the degree to which he mediates the affair through language and rhetoric. Spouting a list of instructions, from ‘Ne scryvenyssh or craftyly thow it write’ (Don’t write it formally or artfully) to ‘Biblotte it with thi teris ek a lite’ (Also blot it with your tears a little) (II. 1026–27), Pandarus essentially advises Troilus to rely heavily

⁴⁵ Here I use the term to mean ‘the art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others’ as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *rhetoric*, *n*. It is beyond the present scope to address the technical complexities of rhetoric as detailed in such texts as Cicero’s *De inventione*, which were influential during the Middle Ages.

on artifice in his letter to Criseyde. Artifice and deception pervade Pandarus's elaborate Deiphebus plan as well. When Pandarus instructs his friend to feign ill, Troilus responds,

thow nedeles	<i>You don't need to</i>
Conseilest me that siklich I me feyne,	<i>Instruct; pretending to be sick</i>
For I am sik in ernest, douteles.	<i>genuinely sick</i> (II. 1527–29)

Judging from such maneuvering, Pandarus is a figure whose capacity for falsity at least equals any charges that may be levelled against Criseyde.

As the initial conversation between Troilus and Pandarus wears on (and on), Pandarus uses his curative offer with increasing pressure to persuade Troilus into confessing the source of his sickness. Significantly, Pandarus's rhetoric frequently contains medical references and metaphors: 'For whoso list have helyng of his leche' (For he who wants healing from his physician), he coaxes, 'To hym byhoveth first unwre his wownde' (He must first reveal his wound) (I. 857–58). Metaphorically, Pandarus presents himself as a physician counseling his patient Troilus to reveal his wound — to talk — if he would be healed. This line is likely taken from the *Consolation of Philosophy* where Lady Philosophy similarly instructs a weeping Boethius.⁴⁶ By appropriating these words, Chaucer aligns Pandarus with Boethius's physician, Lady Philosophy. However, Chaucer's poem in its entirety does not support Pandarus as a healing figure nor the notion that language heals.

In fact, Pandarus and language not only fail to provide any lasting cure for Troilus, they actually function to intensify his disease. This point is underscored in Book IV, as Pandarus attempts to convince Troilus that he will find another Criseyde. Troilus, however, takes little heed of his friend's long speech: 'Oon ere it herde, at tother out it wente' (IV. 434). After at length enduring his friend's words and arguments, Troilus finally exclaims,

This lechecraft, or heeled thus to be,	<i>medicine</i>
Were wel sittyng, if that I were a fend —	<i>Would be suitable</i>
To traysen a wight that trewe is unto me!	<i>betray; person</i> (IV. 436–38)

Troilus then begs Pandarus to stop talking: 'hold thi pees; thow sleest me with thi speche!' (IV. 455). Rather than healing Troilus, Pandarus's words are killing him.

Chaucer leverages his Pandarus as a double abstraction of contagion and language to suggest that language itself is a kind of infectious disease. While Wack

⁴⁶ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Watts, I, §4 (p. 40).

would claim that a 'rhetorical conception of poetry' influenced by Ovid and Boethius 'subtends Pandarus's healing activities throughout *Troilus*,'⁴⁷ in fact, just the opposite is true: a rhetorical conception of poetry subtends Pandarus's *pathogenic* activities throughout *Troilus*. In many ways Pandarus functions as the predominant site of infection. Not only does he transmit lovesickness from Troilus to Criseyde, but read as an allegorical representation of persuasive language he highlights the harmful potential of literary practice as well. In the Middle Ages, Lewis contends, 'There is no antithesis, indeed no distinction, between Rhetoric and Poetry.'⁴⁸ By investigating the potentially harmful consequences of rhetoric through the figure of Pandarus, then, the poem also investigates the potentially harmful consequences of literary practice more generally.

Through much of the poem, Pandarus expresses little concern for the effects of his pandering speech and activities, emotional or otherwise. It is as if he has not considered the full range of possible consequences. It should be noted that while Pandarus is quite talkative, Troilus is comparatively silent. Troilus's lack of speech is yet another symptom of his lovesickness. Victims of the disease were typically 'unable to participate in normal social discourse; they are like the *in-fans*, the non-speaker.'⁴⁹ Pandarus's willingness to fill Troilus's silence with his own ample supply of words actually worsens Troilus's condition and contributes to the disruption of normative social discourse.

Chaucer's pairing of medicine and rhetoric in the figure of Pandarus is likely informed by the ancient feud between the two disciplines of medicine and law. From the mid-fifth century, doctors engaged in discussions on the nature of medicine 'using rhetoric to persuade their readers of the superiority of their own medicine in a competitive situation'.⁵⁰ In turn, poets and philosophers employed medicine in their own arguments. Plato, for example, expresses his opinion on medicine, rhetoric, and law in the *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, and *Laws*. According to Jacques Jouanna, the physician in the *Phaedrus* employs different regimens and different remedies, according to different physical constitutions, to restore bodily health. The true orator is one who can distinguish among the different sorts of souls, knowing which discourse should be employed to persuade different categories of the public. The goal of the art remains the same,

⁴⁷ Wack, 'Pandarus, Poetry, and Healing', p. 129.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, pp. 190–91.

⁴⁹ Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, p. 151.

⁵⁰ French, *Medicine Before Science*, p. 10.

but the means employed — remedy or discourse — is diversified in accordance with the various categories, of body or soul.⁵¹

Plato together addresses law and medicine, body and soul, remedy and discourse, claiming that the scientific ('free') physician and the lawgiver should master persuasion in addition to their respective professional knowledge. A dialogue from the *Laws* further exemplifies issues involved in the debate:

if one of those doctors who practices medicine on the basis of experiences rather than reason should ever encounter a free doctor carrying on a dialogue with a free man who was sick — using arguments that come close to philosophizing, grasping the disease from its source, and going back up to the whole nature of bodies — he would swiftly burst out laughing and would say nothing other than what is always said about such things by most of the so-called doctors. For he would declare, 'Idiot! You're not doctoring the sick man, you're practically educating him, as if what he needed were to become a doctor, rather than healthy!'⁵²

Like Plato, many ancient thinkers, including Cicero and Aristotle, wrote about the law-medicine debate.⁵³ Clearly, physicians and poets have concerned themselves with one another's disciplines from an early point in western history.

The controversy was revisited by intellectuals in fourteenth-century Italy, which was 'not only the cradle of the professions of law and medicine but the scene of the bitterest rivalry between the two'.⁵⁴ Around 1350, for example, Petrarch wrote a scathing attack on a certain physician entitled *Invectiva contra medicum*. Addressing his opponent as an 'erratic madman' and 'ignoramus' who wags a 'reckless, idle, slimy, and drug-smeared tongue', Petrarch repeatedly protests that he does not write against medicine or excellent physicians but only against 'the insolent and factious ones'.⁵⁵ He accuses his physician opponent of subordinating rhetoric to medicine: 'With unheard-of sacrilege, you subject the mistress to the serving-girl, and the liberal art to the mechanical art.'⁵⁶ In essence, the work amounts to a defense of true poetic rhetoric against

⁵¹ Jouanna, 'The Birth of Western Medical Art', p. 70.

⁵² Plato, *The Laws*, trans. by Pangle, ll. 857c and d.

⁵³ For more on the views of Plato and Aristotle regarding disease, see Lloyd, *In the Grip of Disease*, pp. 142–201. The book explores Greek ideas about disease and its influence on such questions as causation and responsibility, mind and body, purification and pollution, good and evil, and authority.

⁵⁴ Rowland, 'The Physician's "Historical Thyng Notable" and the Man of Law', p. 172.

⁵⁵ Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. by Marsh, pp. 79; 73; 83; 5.

⁵⁶ Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. by Marsh, pp. 13–15.

the false rhetoric of physicians. 'I leave lying to you physicians,' he concludes.⁵⁷ Lawyer Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) reiterates Petrarch's claims in his own works. In *De nobilitate legum et medicinae* (1399) he 'shows his relatively low opinion of medicine and of science in general'.⁵⁸ It is perhaps through Salutati that Chaucer learned the contours of the controversy while in Milan, Beryl Rowland suggests, as the lawyer was well known to Visconti.⁵⁹

With *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Physician's Tale, Chaucer joins the ancient debate. While both medicine and rhetoric are represented in *Troilus and Criseyde*, neither is apparently privileged over the other; rather, the poem explores how aspects of each function. By containing within the poem specific instances of persuasive rhetoric, for example, Chaucer separates such a model of language use from the rest of the poem. At various points in the poem Calkas, Diomedes, and Criseyde prove themselves to be, like Pandarus, skilled persuaders. Through these figures, the poem explores the effects of persuasive language.

Moreover, written letters function in the poem as a potent means of both literary persuasion and disease transmission, evident in Criseyde's reluctance to receive Troilus's first correspondence from her uncle. In response to her reluctance, Pandarus 'in hire bosom the lettre down he thraste' (thrust the letter down into her bosom) (II. 1155). This scene literally enacts the poem's depiction of language as an agent of infection. Written word contacting Criseyde's physical body here shows that language is one of the primary media used to violently force her into 'love'. Indeed, the episode mimics Criseyde's dream that features an eagle who 'under hire brest his longe clawes sette' (put his long claws under her breast) (II. 927), seizing her heart and replacing it with his own. Through such means, Chaucer reveals the potentially harmful effects of language and, here, written language in particular.⁶⁰

Similarly, James Paxon reads the poem as 'an autocritique of the sophisticated rhetorical devices used by medieval poets to create the literature of desire'.⁶¹ The sudden moral consciousness Pandarus conveys in Book III may

⁵⁷ Petrarca, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. by Marsh, pp. 29.

⁵⁸ Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati*, p. 89.

⁵⁹ Rowland, 'The Physician's "Historical Thyng Notable" and the Man of Law', pp. 176–77. See page 107 above for Chaucer's connection to Visconti.

⁶⁰ Offering a different view of rhetoric in the poem, Taylor, 'Troilus' Rhetorical Failure', suggests that Troilus ultimately loses Criseyde due to rhetorical failure.

⁶¹ Paxon, 'The Semiotics of Character, Trope, and Troilus', p. 221.

Robert O. Payne suggests that the dilemma traces to medieval rhetoricians who burdened poets with 'adjusting language so that it would make men's emotions serve their reason'.⁶⁴ Yet both emotion and reason are fallible in the fallen man, Payne argues, which leads to misinterpretation. Eventually the poet can find himself 'on trial for having produced effects he didn't intend'.⁶⁵ Indeed, the poet and narrator cannot avoid becoming involved in the story he tells, which leads to a dilemma when he realizes that 'despite his rhetoric, he will be defeated by the demands of the sentence which govern the story he is translating'.⁶⁶ In terms of medicine, these observations suggest that the poet and narrator cannot avoid becoming infected in the process of transmitting diseased language and stories.⁶⁷ In the case of *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, Criseyde laments the loss of her reputation for loyalty in love. Until the end of the world, she says, no good word will be written or sung about her 'for thise bokes wol me shende' (for these books will disgrace me) (v.1060).

We, the audience, are similarly infected by the same diseased language and stories, precisely because aspects of the poem's structure require our own judgment and emotional involvement.⁶⁸ As Evan Carton suggests, 'narrator and reader participate in the plot as fully and in the same way as do the other characters'.⁶⁹ Consequently, just as Troilus is infected with love through his eyes, we are infected with words, and the thoughts they convey, through our eyes as we read. And just as Troilus and Criseyde are infected with Pandarus's rhetoric through their ears, so too is Chaucer's listening audience.⁷⁰ Pierced with the gaze and resonating with sounds of conversation and laughter, the poem is itself quite conscious of eyes and ears.⁷¹ Inevitably, the audience must experience the disease that so completely permeates the text. As we find ourselves participating

⁶⁴ Payne, 'Chaucer and the Art of Rhetoric', p. 53.

⁶⁵ Payne, 'Chaucer and the Art of Rhetoric', p. 53.

⁶⁶ Huppé, 'The Unlikely Narrator: The Narrative Strategy of the *Troilus*', p. 194.

⁶⁷ This idea of diseased language and stories is explored in the *House of Fame* and *Parliament of Fowls*, as I argue in previous chapters.

⁶⁸ Mehl, 'Chaucer's Narrator: *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*', expands on this point.

⁶⁹ Carton, 'Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus' Bed and Chaucer's Art', p. 223.

⁷⁰ The frontispiece to Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61 (fol. 1^v) depicts Chaucer reciting the poem to an audience of nobility.

⁷¹ Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, notes 'the presence of others (Pandarus, the poet, his readers) at supposedly private moments; these others are aware of what is happening, but their awareness is often not specified as visual, and may belong to the ear at least as much as the eye' (p. 121).

in the plot by 'coming to feel confined',⁷² for example, or by judging Criseyde, or even by resenting Troilus for laughing at the sympathy we may have felt for him, we must also find that we are not immune to Pandarus's contagious — and potentially deadly — language games, but that 'we too become pandars'⁷³ and participate in their circulation.⁷⁴

By involving the audience in this manner, Chaucer shares his impossible burden of being simultaneously faithful to sources, characters, and audience. We should be wary, therefore, when with the first stanza he departs from Boccaccio's text by calling on the fury Thesiphone, avenger of murder, as his muse.⁷⁵ If, as Alfred David notes, 'it is a strange advocate of Love who dedicates himself to serving his Lord by choosing to tell a tragic tale of true love betrayed!,'⁷⁶ then calling on a Fury to help tell that tragic tale is stranger still.⁷⁷ While Robertson suggests that this invocation assists with the task of telling about libidinous love that leads to tragic action,⁷⁸ we cannot overlook the fact that it also engages the revenge cycle, initiating the tragic action that is the poem and figuring poetics itself as a vengeful war.⁷⁹ Lee Patterson contends that Chaucer 'seeks not to disarm the text but to arm the reader'.⁸⁰ Functioning like a diseased *corpus*, the body of Chaucer's text 'calls down divine retribution in the shape of a disease that will, in its turn, penetrate, corrupt, and pollute the body politic'.⁸¹ By participating in the cycle of vengeance, the poem underscores the use of words not for healing, but rather for harm.

⁷² Lambert, 'Telling the Story in *Troilus and Criseyde*', p. 68.

⁷³ Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 136.

⁷⁴ On a related point, Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse*, investigates speech in *Troilus and Criseyde* as 'a way of reading the complex and conflicting forces in human society, past and present' (p. 83).

⁷⁵ As Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, notes, 'Thesiphone means "voice" and signifies libido' (p. 474). Voice may relate to the use of rhetoric to serve 'love', both on Pandarus's part within the poem and on the part of both narrator and Chaucer with regard to the poem itself. Thesiphone is again invoked at the opening of IV, 24.

⁷⁶ David, *The Strumpet Muse*, p. 27.

⁷⁷ Wise, *The Influence of Statius upon Chaucer*, suggests that this reference may trace to Statius's *Thebaid*, where Oedipus calls on the queen of furies (p. 4).

⁷⁸ Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, pp. 474–5.

⁷⁹ Arguably, the narrator wants to position himself outside the conflict, 'To prey for hem that Loves servauntz be, | And write hire wo, and lyve in charite' (I. 48–49).

⁸⁰ Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, p. 153.

⁸¹ Gilles, 'Love and Disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', describes the physical 'devi-

'Goosissh Poeples Speche': Dreams, Prophecy, and Interpretation

On his first visit to the lovesick Troilus in Book 1, Pandarus immediately inquires into the cause of his friend's woe. Troilus's reluctance to speak prompts from Pandarus a flood of words, stories, and rhetorical tactics. In mentioning Oënone's letter, Pandarus attempts to coax Troilus into talking, claiming that those who are in love cannot heal themselves. As part of his persuasion, Pandarus mentions Oënone's 'compleynthe', likely a reference to the fifth epistle of Ovid's *Heroides*.⁸² Curiously, Pandarus's rendition of Oënone's letter is not entirely correct. Pandarus claims that Oënone wrote of Apollo's inability to heal himself with his medical knowledge:

'Phebus, that first fond art of medicine,' *first established*
 Quod she, 'and couthe in every wightes care *knew*
 Remedye and reed, by herbes he knew fyne, *advice*
 Yet to hymself his konnyng was ful bare, *knowing*
 For love hadde hym so bounded in a snare,
 Al for the doughter of the kyng Amete,
 That al his craft ne koude his sorwes bete.' *could not relieve his sorrows* (l. 659–65)

Apollo, however, is mentioned nowhere in Ovid's letter from Oënone to Paris. Rather, it is Oënone who is unable to heal herself from the harm Paris has caused, due to her love for him: 'Whatever herb potent for aid, whatever root that is used for healing grows in all the world, is mine. Alas, wretched me, that love may not be healed by herbs! Skilled in an art, I am left helpless by the very art I know.'⁸³ While it is impossible to know whether Pandarus (or the narrator or Chaucer) intentionally misquotes the text, we can explore the effects of this (mis)quotation in *Troilus and Criseyde*. First, Pandarus's replacement of Oënone with Apollo not only shifts gender but also compromises Oënone's identity as a healer. Second, the modification foregrounds the importance of medicine, rhetoric, prophecy, and interpretation in the poem.

Oënone seems to have learned the arts of healing and prophecy from Apollo, although some accounts credit Rhea. Daughter of the river-god Cebren, Oënone falls in love with and marries Paris. He eventually leaves her in

ant body' in these terms (p. 183). Here, I figuratively apply his phrasing to the deviant textual body of Chaucer's poem.

⁸² As recommended by the editors of *The Riverside Chaucer*. Outside of the *Heroides*, Oënone's story is told most thoroughly by Apollodorus.

⁸³ Ovid, *Heroides*, trans. by Showerman, p. 69.

Troy to pursue Helen in Sparta. Because of her own divinations and the prophecies of Cassandra, Oënone warns Paris against sailing toward Helen. Failing to persuade him, she tells him to come to her if wounded, for she alone can heal him. When Paris carries Helen away from Sparta and Troy is besieged, he is shot by Philoctetes with the bow of Hercules, and so he returns to Oënone. But she, nursing her grievance, refuses to heal him (III. 12. 6).⁸⁴ Although Pandarus emphasizes one aspect of the letter, its broader context points to prophecies ignored and healing withheld. Had Paris listened to Oënone and Cassandra, the entire Trojan War may have been averted. *Troilus and Criseyde* issues a similar warning regarding the consequences that result from ignoring prophecies. Since prophecy is intimately bound together in the poem with dreams and their interpretations, the following exploration necessarily addresses all three phenomena.

After Criseyde leaves Troy, Troilus's lovesickness continues to such an extent that he tells Pandarus he thinks he will die, based on his illness and his dreams:

For wele I fele, by my maladic
And by my dremes now and yore ago,
Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye. (v. 316–18)

Pandarus responds passionately, telling Troilus that dreams have no value. He then proceeds to offer a catalogue of dream theories not unlike the one with which the *House of Fame* begins. Some of Pandarus's comments on dreams include: they result from melancholy; no one knows exactly what they mean; priests say dreams are revelations from the gods or infernal illusions; doctors say they result from diet or the balance of humours; others say that dreams are affected by the moon. To trust dreams, Pandarus concludes, is both false and damaging.⁸⁵ Yet both Oënone's letter and subsequent events in the poem would question Pandarus's thorough dismissal of dreams.

Later, Troilus dreams that he is walking through the forest and encounters a boar with large tusks embracing and kissing Criseyde. Upon hearing Troilus recount the dream, Pandarus reiterates his view of dreams:

Have I nat seyde er this,	<i>said before this</i>
That dremes many a maner man bigile?	<i>many kinds of men</i>
And whi? For folk expounden hem amys.	<i>interpret; incorrectly</i> (v. 1276–78)

⁸⁴ Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. by Frazer, II, 51–57.

⁸⁵ See lines 358–85 of Book v for the entire response.

He concludes, 'thow kanst no dremes rede' (v. 1280). Yet Pandarus himself proceeds to 'expound' Troilus's dream 'amys', identifying the boar as Criseyde's father. Pandarus then quickly dismisses the dream, suggesting that a letter would more likely yield the truth of the situation. Eventually this advice is also proven misguided, as Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's dream reveals more truth about the situation than Criseyde's letters.

Pandarus's opinion of dreams was not uncommon in the late fourteenth century. As Steven F. Kruger explains, 'in the late Middle Ages, dream divination continued to come under attack alongside astrological and other divinatory practices'.⁸⁶ However, *Troilus and Criseyde* does not uniformly present either dreams or prophecy as superior or inferior means of accessing truth; rather, the poem offers a variety of perspectives. Take Calkas, for example. He is connected to Apollo's realms of medicine, poetry, and prophecy, concerns central to *Troilus and Criseyde*. Yet what role, precisely, does he play? He is referred to as a lord of great authority (I. 65), a man of foresight and wisdom (I. 79), who knew in advance that Troy would be destroyed. Nothing about the tone of these descriptions seems ironic, which may render Troilus's dismissal of Calkas as 'unholsum, and myslyved' (corrupt, and wicked) (IV. 330) as unwise as Pandarus's dismissal of dreams.

Yet Calkas does appear somewhat callous toward his daughter and her desires, especially when compared to Troilus and Diomedes. Troilus will not 'go ravysshe here' (go abduct her) (IV. 530), as Pandarus urges, because he fears 'hire herte to perturbe | With violence' (IV. 561–62). In a similar vein, Diomedes respectfully asks Criseyde for her opinion of the war. Calkas, however, does not consult his daughter regarding her removal from Troy, and of his own will he persuades the Greeks to exchange her for Antenor. Surely it is not surprising that Calkas, as a father, is concerned about his daughter. We are told that Calkas beseeched the Greeks so long 'That, for to hele hym of his sorwes soore' (IV. 132) the Greeks agree to the Antenor-Criseyde exchange. According to Diomedes, Calkas 'knew ful wel there shal nat scapen oon | That Troian is' (v.908–09) and would otherwise not have exchanged Antenor for his daughter. Yet his decision brings sorrow to many, beginning with Troilus and Criseyde. Using Calkas as an allegorical means, the poem suggests that prophecy maintains the potential to engender harm thereby presenting a problematical portrait of divination and its end results.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 13.

⁸⁷ This conclusion is in accord with the claim in Greenfield, 'The Role of Calkas in *Troilus and Criseyde*', that 'Chaucer is ridiculing the astrology-prophetism of Calkas' (p. 145).

As the daughter of Calkas, Criseyde's relationship to prophecy and dreams is by no means simplistic, underscoring the poem's diverse perspectives on these topics. In a scene that comments on the relationship between Calkas and Criseyde by explicitly juxtaposing language, prophecy, and interpretation, Criseyde tells Troilus that once in Greece, she will trick her father into believing that he has misunderstood the gods: 'I shal hym so enchaunten with my sawes | That right in hevene his sowle is, shal he mete' (I shall so enchant him with my speeches | That he will dream his soul is in heaven) (IV. 1395–96) and that 'his coward herte | Made hym amys the goddes text to glose' (IV. 1409–10). While Criseyde proposes to use her speech to persuade Calkas that his prophecies have misinterpreted the gods' text, she uses her verbal rendition of the plan more immediately to persuade Troilus to agree with her leaving. In both cases, language is used with the intent to manipulate interpretations, people, and future events.

Criseyde's own dreams and contextual events may offer the richest opportunities for exploring her relationship with dreams and prophecy. When Pandarus visits Criseyde early in Book II, for example, she is enjoying a book in her garden. Greeting Pandarus as he approaches, she says, 'This nyght thrie, | To goode mot it turne, of yow I mette' (Last night three times | I dreamt of you, may something good come of it) (II. 89–90). Pandarus's visit proves her dreams of him to be prophetic. Meanwhile Pandarus himself experienced a sort of dream while in bed that very morning:

The swalowe Proigne, with a sorowful lay,	<i>Procne</i>
Whan morwen com, gan make hire waymentynge	<i>sorrowful song</i>
Whi she forshapen was; and evere lay	<i>transformed</i>
Pandare abedde, half in a slomberynge,	<i>Pandarus</i>
Til she so neigh hym made hire cheterynge	<i>chattering</i>
How Tereus gan forth hire suster take,	
That with the noyse of hire he gan awake. (II. 64–70)	

While still half asleep, Pandarus hears a bird singing and 'dreams' that it is Procne telling of how she was transformed into a bird after her husband Tereus raped her sister Philomela.⁸⁸ Pandarus's dream, if not prophetic, at least casts a dark shadow on his imminent visit to Criseyde.

Lumiansky, 'Calchas in the Early Versions of the Troilus Story', provides additional views. Consider also Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, who addresses both Calkas and Cassandra (pp. 74–83). Wood, *Chaucer and the Country of the Stars*, and Astell, *Chaucer and the Universe of Learning*, offer relevant information on Chaucer's poetic use of astrology.

⁸⁸ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is one source for the tale of Procne and Philomela.

During his visit, Pandarus informs Criseyde that Troilus is in love with her. Further, he says, 'if ye late hym deyen, I wol sterve —' (II. 323), essentially making her responsible for whether Troilus and Pandarus live or die. Lying in bed later that evening Criseyde listens to a nightingale's song until 'at the laste the dede slep hire hente' (II. 924). This somewhat ominous phrasing — being seized by dead sleep — adds weight to the nightingale reference, which alludes to Philomela. Bookending Pandarus's visit to Criseyde, then, are Procne (before) and Philomela (after), who together tell a story of physical and sexual violence against women and the subsequent attempt to silence them. That Procne and Philomela embrace the exchange between Pandarus and Criseyde must necessarily influence how we read that exchange.

Once asleep, Criseyde dreams of an eagle, feathered white as bone. In her dream the eagle sets his long claws under her breast, tears out her heart, and replaces it with his own. In many ways Criseyde's dream echoes the themes of Procne and Philomela's story. As a paradoxical portrait of anesthetized violence, bittersweet severity, and divided unity, the dream speaks to the heart of the poem itself. In many ways it may be interpreted as a prophecy of exchanges to come, including not only hearts but also letters, rings, and a brooch, as well as that of Antenor for Criseyde herself. These interpretations are few among many that have been proposed, leading Valerie A. Ross to conclude that the eagle dream's greatest importance lies in forcing the reader to interpret.⁸⁹ We are not told of any thoughts or interpretations Criseyde herself may have about her dream, only that she is neither frightened nor feels any pain. However, regarding dreams in general at this point we might surmise that she at least thinks they are worth mentioning, judging from her earlier exchange with Pandarus in the garden. Later, however, Criseyde apparently discredits dreams, warning Pandarus to 'ben war of gooshissh poeples speche, | That dremen thynges whiche as nevere were' (III. 584–85).

Criseyde's contemplation of Troy from beyond its walls destabilizes her relationship to prophecy in particular. She laments, 'Prudence, allas, oon of thyne eyen thre | Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!' (v. 744–45).⁹⁰ Thomas Aquinas recognized the etymological root of the word 'prudence' in *providentia* indicating a type of foresight.⁹¹ Criseyde realizes that she lacked the third

⁸⁹ Ross, 'Believing Cassandra', p. 349. Ross also provides a brief summary of the various critical interpretations of Criseyde's dream.

⁹⁰ As discussed in Burrow, 'The Third Eye of Prudence', p. 37.

⁹¹ See McAlpine, 'Criseyde's Prudence', p. 210.

eye of Prudence when she decided to leave the city. Although she could see into the past and understand the present, she could not see into the future, a fact that comes to cause her concern. Regarding Criseyde's prudence, Chauncey Wood and Monica E. McAlpine offer two opposing views: that she lacks prudence altogether and that she possesses it utterly.⁹² Regarding the poem's presentation of prophetic foresight, I would suggest that Criseyde occupies just one position within a spectrum that also includes Calkas and Cassandra. Refusing to endorse one uniform perspective, both the poem and Criseyde herself reside within a range of possibilities. In many ways, the poem forces the reader to reach their own conclusions regarding the proper function and even the morality of prophetic insight.

This same task faces Troilus, who experiences various types of dreams that must be interpreted. At the opening of Book v, for example, he dreams of

the dredefulleste thynges
 That myghte ben; as mete he were allone *he dreamed*
 In place horrible making ay his mone,
 Or meten that he was amonges alle
 His enemys, and in hire hondes falle. (v. 248–52)

We may interpret these dream images in any number of ways. They may be prophetic, given that Troilus, having faced Greek enemies, eventually finds himself alone first after Criseyde leaves him and ultimately following his death. However, Troilus does not moan from heaven but goes blissfully and laughs. Troilus apparently places faith in his dreams, as well as the omen of the owl that at one point shrieks at him for two nights (v. 320), yet, as we shall see, he does not believe Cassandra's interpretation of his boar dream. Overall, Troilus seems to occupy an variable position with regard to dreams similar to Criseyde's.

Pandarus offers yet another perspective by arguing that those who believe in dreams are beyond remedy. When Troilus says he fears he will die, based on his dreams and the owl, Pandarus replies,

But whoso wil nought trower reed ne loore, *trust advice or teaching*
 I kan nat sen in hym no remedie,
 But lat hym worthen with his fantasie. *leave him be; delusions* (v. 327–29)

With this remark, Pandarus implies that a remedy for Troilus requires that he trust outside counsel. Pandarus presumably wants Troilus to trust his own

⁹² For the former, see Wood, *The Elements of Troilus*, pp. 129–43; for the latter, see McAlpine, 'Criseyde's Prudence'.

advice, according to which Troilus would dismiss his dreams entirely. However, the remark becomes more interesting given Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's boar dream. While the poem does not support Pandarus's view of dreams, it does suggest that Troilus will find remedy by trusting outside counsel. Troilus, trying to find his way through the brambles, does not summarily reject his dream but he does initially reject Cassandra's interpretation. We, along with Troilus, must decide who and what to trust. Constance B. Heatt suggests that 'Chaucer has arranged matters so that neither the psychological meaning nor the prophetic one can be completely rejected; we have two equally viable alternatives'.⁹³ In effect, the poem's complex, multifaceted, wide-ranging presentation of dreams and prophecy destabilizes both media. Consequently, the reader is also destabilized, left without a stable reference point from which to interpret, dreams and poem alike.

Cassandra is perhaps the poem's most interesting figure with regard to dreams, prophecy, and interpretation. Readers will recall that Cassandra received the gift of prophecy from Apollo because of his passion for her. When she ended their relationship, Apollo added to her gift of prophecy the curse that no one would believe her.⁹⁴ In *Il Filostrato*, Boccaccio denies Cassandra the gift of prophecy, casting her as 'shrewish and cruel'⁹⁵ for taunting her brother Troilus about his choice to love 'the daughter of a rascally priest'.⁹⁶ By contrast, Chaucer's Cassandra is a keen reader of texts, dreams, and history. In this respect, Chaucer's Cassandra actualizes the etymological connection between seeing or knowing and history, following such medieval authorities as Hugh of St Victor and Isidore of Seville who traced the word 'history' to the 'Greek term *ιστορεῖν* ("inquire, observe")', that is, from "seeing" or from "knowing".⁹⁷ When Troilus asks Cassandra to resolve his doubt about his boar dream, she begins with old stories: 'If thow a soth of this desirest knowe' (If you desire to know the truth of this), she tells her brother regarding his dream, 'Thow most a few of olde stories (v. 1458–59). After telling of Diana,

⁹³ Heatt, 'The Dreams of Troilus, Criseyde, and Chauntecleer', p. 402.

⁹⁴ Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', in *Aeschylus 1*, ed. by Grene and Lattimore, pp. 81–87, ll. 1201–1330.

⁹⁵ Knapp, 'Boccaccio and Chaucer on Cassandra', p. 415. This short piece provides a clear comparison of Cassandra as she appears in Boccaccio and Chaucer. For a more general comparative overview of these two works, see Windeatt, 'Chaucer and the *Filostrato*'.

⁹⁶ Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato*, trans. by Gordon, p. 118.

⁹⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 67.

and infantile behavior'.¹⁰¹ While Chaucer's text proves itself subversively 'sly-dyng' here, the broader point may be less about gender and more about human nature. As Peggy Ann Knapp observes, the philosophical lesson Cassandra teaches Troilus 'is about the mutability of all human "sikerness," not the perfidy of an individual person'.¹⁰²

Troilus's boar dream and Cassandra's interpretation of it provide the keys to curing Troilus's lovesickness. Although it is possible to identify any number of factors that may contribute to curing Troilus — including the brooch, Diomede, and even Criseyde's unfaithfulness itself — the dream and its interpretation are most essential. Indeed, the dream and its interpretation communicate the truth most directly to Troilus. Throughout the majority of the poem, Troilus refuses to act on his own behalf, seeking all manner of assistance outside himself to remedy his lovesickness. It is not until Book v that he finally asks himself, 'Whi nyl I helpen to myn owen cure?' (v. 49). By asking Cassandra to interpret his dream, Troilus takes the vital first step toward his cure. Initially Troilus responds with anger to his sister's reading of his dream, slandering both her and prophecy:

‘Thow sayst nat soth,’ quod he, ‘thow sorceresse,
With al thy false goost of prophecye!
Thow wenest ben a gret devyneresse! *prophetess*
Now sestow nat this fool of fantasie *do you not see*
Peyneth hire on ladys for to lye? *Take pains*
Awey!’ quod he. ‘Ther Joves yeve the sorwe!
Thow shalt be fals, peraunter, yet tomorwe!’ *perhaps* (v. 1520–26)

Although Apollo's curse may justify Troilus's initial disbelief of Cassandra, her interpretation of the dream spurs Troilus to anger and action. Soon after his sister departs, Troilus

Foryat his wo, for anger of hire speche;
And from his bed al sodeynly he sterte,
As though al hool hym hadde ymad a leche. *completely healthy; doctor*
(v. 1535–37)

Cassandra's interpretation of the dream functions as the physician Troilus has long sought, awakening him from the lovesick stupor that has possessed him throughout the poem.

¹⁰¹ Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, p. 151.

¹⁰² Knapp, 'Boccaccio and Chaucer on Cassandra', p. 416.

Although the truth revealed by Cassandra's dream interpretation moves, Troilus into action he soon falls back into lovesickness, likely in part because he does not believe his sister. Not until Troilus spies the brooch is he finally convinced that Criseyde has been untrue. When Pandarus hears about it, he expresses hate for Criseyde; in contrast, Troilus pursues vengeance from Diomedes. That is, Troilus no longer lies sick in bed. Instead, he vows to seek his own death in arms (v. 1718) and battles the Greeks day and night, slaying thousands, eventually dying at the hand of Achilles. Troilus's dream and Cassandra's interpretation of that dream are the primary forces that cure Troilus of his lovesickness. The dream and its interpretation reveal the truth, later confirmed by the brooch, that Criseyde has been false.

Language, disease, and dreams ideally function through *Troilus and Criseyde* as catalysts serving to deepen and transform cultural identity, ultimately guiding toward greater health and wholeness. The poem shows that letters and language can function as pathogenic agents while dreams and their interpretation can function as sources of healing. To some extent Oenone's situation may apply to Chaucer himself, who is left helpless by his verbal art. Unable to heal the diseases they describe, his words, like dreams and prophecies, require our interpretation. While *Troilus and Criseyde* shows that the interpretive process maintains the potential to heal, the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* warns that it also maintains the potential to harm, which is the subject of the next chapter.

‘THY LITEL WIT ASLEPE’:
THE PROLOGUE TO THE
LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

In the *Legend of Good Women*, Dido awakens from a restless sleep to ask her sister Anne what dream might have frightened her. Confessing her feelings for Aeneas, Dido says ‘al my love and lyf lyth in his cure’ (l. 1176). The Middle English word ‘cure’ (translated here as ‘care’) denotes a range of possible meanings, from attention to duty to medicinal treatment. Although Dido seems to suffer from a generic case of lovesickness, the subsequent passage resists such a simplistic reading. After dawn, as Dido prepares to go hunting, Chaucer’s curious representation invites us to read her quite literally as a letter in a book. Her horse, ‘paper-whit’ (l. 1198), suggests the literary page across which she rides before our reading eyes. Resembling an elaborate and expensively decorated binding, the saddle upon which Dido sits is ‘red, enbrouded with delyt, | Of gold the barres up enbosedede hye’ (red, delightfully adorned, | Embossed with bars of gold) (ll. 1198–1200). Dido sits on her horse ‘al in gold and perre wrye’ (covered all in gold and jewels) (l. 1201), shining like an illuminated letter atop the white backdrop. Fair as the ‘bryghte morwe, | That heleth syke folk of nyghtes sorwe’ (ll. 1202–03), Dido maintains curative powers in her lettered form. By associating Dido directly with dreams, with the text itself, and with healing, the poem gestures beyond a simple case of lovesickness and beyond a simple re-telling of the Dido-Aeneas tale.

Dido’s curious depiction in fact suggests that historical figures are inseparable from their literary representations. As Marilyn Desmond claims, the profiles of women featured in the *Legend* are ‘not simply a reference to their histor-

ical, folkloric, or legendary past, but a reference to their preservation in texts.¹ Indeed, Chaucer's depiction of Dido recognizes the complex interdependencies inherent to literary representation. Moreover, through the various stages of the striking representation of Dido, Chaucer reformulates conventional expectations regarding lovesickness and its treatment as typically portrayed in courtly love literature.² Rather than representing a lovesick man seeking cure in his beloved,³ Chaucer instead depicts a lovesick Dido who, despite initially investing Aeneas with curative power, soon appropriates such power in the lettered form of herself. This reformulation effectively inverts roles of gender as dictated by the courtly love tradition but also, and perhaps more importantly, shifts the focus from curing lovesickness within gendered relationships to curing the literary representation of gendered relationships. As curative power shifts from an individual, gendered context to a literary one, Chaucer's Dido becomes a nostrum for the harm resulting from her literary representation. In other words, the *Legend* initially suggests that Dido, in her lettered form, maintains the ability to metaphorically cure herself — and more broadly, literary portrayals of herself.

Yet Dido's appearance in the *Legend of Good Women* shows just one facet of this richly complex poem. Viewing the legends more generally, we might ask ourselves what makes this group of women 'good'? Among them are those who have committed suicide, murder, and infanticide. Even allowing for irony, if literary representation holds the potential power to heal, then surely re-telling such gruesome tales holds equal potential to harm. Indeed, in the opening lines of Philomela's legend the narrator complains that reading Tereus's story made his eyes painful and sore:

And, as to me, so grisely was his dede
That, whan that I his foule storye rede,
Myne eyen wexe foule and sore also. *became* (ll. 2238–40)

Even more striking, the narrator continues:

Yit last the venym of so longe ago,
That it enfeteth hym that wol beholde
The storye of Tereus, of which I tolde. (ll. 2241–43)

¹ Desmond, *Reading Dido*, p. 155.

² Representative works on courtly love include Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* and Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*.

³ Consider, for example, Marie de France's *lais* *Lanval* and *Milun*, which refer directly to the lady's ability to cure, and Chaucer's own *Book of the Duchess*.

Using the language of disease, or physical maladies, the narrator tells us directly that the story's poison will infect anyone who 'beholds' it, which directly implies seeing or reading. Further, by reminding us that he is writing this tale, the narrator confesses his own role in transmitting its poison. Ultimately these lines reflect Chaucer's recognition of and reflection on the effects of his own complex role as a poet (re)writing tales from the past for present and future readers.

The *Legend's* Dido and Tereus provide representative examples of how the poem, like others included in this study, conveys the notion that literary practice holds the power to both heal and harm. In the case of Dido, a literary figure is invested with curative power, and through Tereus we are shown how a story holds the potential to harm those who read it. We might further observe that the narrator and Chaucer maintain greater potential to harm and heal, as those who engage in the creation and transmission of character and story. The narrator admits as much while telling the tale of Phyllis. Demophon, he says,

doth with Phillis what so that hym leste, *what he pleases*
As wel coude I, if that me leste so,
Tellen al his doynge to and fro. (ll. 2469–71)

The awkward placement of the last line allows the narrator to imply with first two lines, 'I could have my way with Phyllis if I wished.' In many ways, then, this poem considers both the creative and destructive potential of literary practice for all players involved, from authors and characters to narrators, patrons, and audiences. Exploring this idea further, in this chapter I focus on the Prologue (primarily the F version)⁴ to show how the text reflects the fundamentally divided and fragmented cultural context out of which it emerges and, leveraging the dream and paradox, attempts to bring about wholeness, or healing, through the processes of reassembling and re-membling.⁵

Perhaps more than in Chaucer's other dream visions, a literary self-consciousness pervades the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. In the view of Robert O. Payne, 'The Prologue is more immediately concerned with the subject of poetry than any other single work of Chaucer's.'⁶ Another principle feature that distinguishes the Prologue from Chaucer's preceding dream poems

⁴ My emphasis here on the Prologue, the dream vision portion of the poem, is largely due to the focus of the overall study, viz. the intersection of dreams and medicine.

⁵ That is, 'To put together again, reverse the dismembering of', per the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *re-member*, v².

⁶ Payne, *The Key of Remembrance*, p. 91.

is that a single book does not initiate the narrator's dream. 'Instead', Sheila Delaney contends, 'there is tradition at large, literary tradition as a source of information, or at least of stories about all sorts of things.'⁷ Thus the Prologue and the legends that follow engage in an expansive exploration of literary practice itself by way of participating in such practice. Almost immediately after the poem begins the narrator expresses his clear endorsement of old books: 'Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve | These bokes, there we han noon other preve' (F. 27–28). The narrator's comment attempts to provide some guidance for when to privilege authority over experience. As the teller of tales that appear in books, the narrator juggles both authority and experience simultaneously. For Dorothy Bethurum, this point is a central to understanding Chaucer as narrator. 'The heart of Chaucer's position as narrator', she posits, 'is to set off the contrast between books and experience.'⁸ Indeed, we see the narrator's interest shift in favor of the latter with the arrival of spring:

whan that the month of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge, *birds*
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farewel my bok and my devocioun! (F. 36–39)

When spring arrives, the narrator, instead of reading, walks in the meadow to see his favorite flower, the daisy. At this point the poem apparently turns away from books and authority in favor of the natural world and personal experience; however, we cannot escape the world of books so easily, as mention of the daisy clearly invokes the marguerite tradition with which Chaucer's audience was likely well familiar.⁹ In this way, the Prologue provides a 'double' endorsement of authority and personal experience by being of both the natural world and the world of books simultaneously.¹⁰ This doubleness, or what shades into irony or paradox at various points throughout the poem, is perfectly expressed by the highly personal, experiential dream that serves to contain and preserve the material of authoritative books.

⁷ Delany, *The Naked Text*, p. 43.

⁸ Bethurum, 'Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems', p. 20.

⁹ Wimsatt, *The Marguerite Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut*, makes a good case for the influence of this tradition on Chaucer's poetry.

¹⁰ Elbow, *Oppositions in Chaucer*, presents this element of Chaucer's poetry as 'complex irony, which can be understood as a way of saying opposite things simultaneously without either being undermined by the other' (p. 14).

In a similar manner, the Prologue's pivotal image of the daisy serves to bring together many disparate elements within the poem. Etymologically the word 'daisy' traces to 'day's eye', because the flower opens to the sun and closes once darkness falls. As a symbol, then, the daisy is strongly associated with seeing and sight. Traditionally the daisy is also associated with healing. Florence Percival contends that 'the only virtue attaching to the real daisy was its reputed medicinal powers' and 'it was thought literally to have power to heal the heart'.¹¹ Accordingly, the narrator tells us that seeing the daisy opening to the sun heals his sadness:

To seen this flour ayein the sonne sprede, *expand against the sun*
Whan it upryseth erly by the morwe.
That blissful sighte softneth al my sorwe. (F. 48–50)

These associations among the daisy, sight, and healing are extended and underscored by the dream component. As the sun sets and the daisy begins to close, the narrator makes his way home. Lying down, he falls asleep and experiences a dream, or vision, in which the daisy features prominently — he sees, paradoxically, when he closes his eyes.

Within the dream the god of Love appears walking through a meadow hand-in-hand with a queen. She is dressed in green with a net of gold covering her hair, and she wears a crown of small white flowers made of a single pearl. This queen, Alceste, is the picture of a daisy, which in turn associates her with sight and healing. In fact, Alceste is associated with healing to such an extent that at one point the narrator says she has saved his life: 'For, nadde comfort ben of hire presence, | I hadde ben ded' (F. 278–79). By means of the dream image, the queen who is dressed to look like a daisy becomes associated with the flower's healing powers. The French word *marguerite* means both daisy and pearl, 'its "daisy" aspect suggesting regularly the perfection of the courtly lady, the object of human, sexual love, and its "pearl" aspect suggesting virginal purity, an expression of divine love'.¹² Such a 'fluid use of symbolism'¹³ employed by medieval poetry allows for the interchangeability of the daisy, the pearl, the lady, and the dream, all of which in turn become associated with sight and healing. Moreover, the extent to which these elements appear in the Prologue associates the literary work itself with sight and healing.

¹¹ Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, p. 31.

¹² Payne, *The Key of Remembrance*, p. 107.

¹³ Wimsatt, *The Marguerite Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut*, p. 64.

Yet the god of Love introduces the elements of ambiguity and harm. Dressed in silk decorated with green leaves and red roses, he has wings that are spread ‘aungelyke’ (angel-like) (F. 236), and he appears to be holding two fiery darts. Although his clothing would associate him with the natural world and his wings with a heavenly realm, the fiery darts are almost devilish. While Alceste’s association with the daisy grants her the ability to heal the narrator’s heart, the god of Love has a more dubious effect. Upon first encountering him, the narrator says, ‘his loking dooth myn herte colde’ (F. 240). This figure of Love appears, again paradoxically, not loving but wrathful and threatening. At least initially, then, it seems that Alceste brings healing while Love brings harm.

This initial impression is supported as the dream continues and Love addresses the narrator with insults and accusations. He seems most upset by how the narrator’s literary practice — or at least his interpretation of the narrator’s literary practice — have impacted him:

And thow my foo, and al my folk werreyest,	<i>wage war on</i>
And of myn olde servauntes thow mysseyest,	<i>slander</i>
And hynderest hem with thy translacioun,	
And lettest folk from hire devocioun	<i>keep people</i>
To serve me, and holdest it folye	
To serve Love. (F. 322–27)	

When the narrator kneels before Alceste, Love rails that a worm is more worthy of coming near the queen — the narrator, he explains, is not right for the purpose. Continuing his tirade, Love claims that the narrator’s books — particularly the *Romance of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde* — have harmed his reputation, the reputation of women, and the extent to which men trust women. The F version reads:

Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,	
That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,	
And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;	
And of Creseyde thou hast seyde as the lyst,	<i>what you please</i>
That maketh men to women lasse triste.	<i>trust less</i> (F. 329–33)

The G version adds,

Has thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok	
How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok,	
In shewynge how that wemen han don mis?	
But natheles, answer me now to this;	
Why noldest thow as wel [han] seyde goodnesse	<i>would you</i>

Of wemen, as thou hast seyde wikednesse?
 Was there no good matere in thy mynde,
 Ne in alle thy bokes ne coudest thou nat fynde
 Some story of women that were goode and trewe? (G. 264–72)

Yet even as the god of Love accuses the narrator of causing such harm, he apparently fails to see that his own accusations and (mis)interpretations maintain equal potential to harm the narrator and his reputation.

With this interaction between the god of Love and the narrator, the poem explores what it means to harm — and thereby what it would mean to heal — within a specifically literary context. The ballad continues this exploration, with ample paradoxical play. Impressed with the noble queen of his dream, the narrator is moved to compose a poem-within-a-dream-poem. It speaks indirectly of old books and stories — mainly the Bible and Greek mythology — through the figures that populate them: Absalom, Esther, Penelope, Helen of Troy, Hero, Dido. Structurally the ballad returns to some form of paradox or irony in urging these figures to 'hide' their signature traits (Absalom's golden tresses, for example) because 'My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne' (My lady comes, who makes all this dim and pale) (F. 255). That is, the ballad reveals the very things it urges should remain hidden while keeping hidden the overt object of praise; namely, his lady Alceste.¹⁴ Later we learn that the god of Love cannot fathom this incongruence, and instead interprets the composition as proof of the narrator's incompetence, accusing him of forgetting to write about Alceste:

A ful gret negligence
 Was yt to the, that ylke tyme thou made
 'Hyd, Absolon, thy tresses', in balade, *Hide*
 That thou forgate hire in thi song to sette. (F. 537–40)

Love concludes, 'Thy litel wit was thilke tyme aslepe' (F. 547). Within the dream, Love's comment may have been intended to insult the narrator and his literary — and, plausibly, sexual — abilities; however, readers of the dream-poem can see that it has a counter effect, revealing his own interpretive ineptitude and his own slumbering wit. In Lisa Kiser's words, 'The God of Love's specific comments and judgments about Chaucer's poetry reveal him to be an incompetent literary critic.'¹⁵ Indeed, if Love misunderstands the simple ballad, then how could he properly interpret the *Romance of the Rose* and *Troilus and*

¹⁴ At this point in the F version the narrator does not yet know Alceste's name.

¹⁵ Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales*, p. 71.

Criseyde. On another level, we as readers recognize that the god of Love has simply spoken the truth: that is, the narrator was in fact asleep, and dreaming, when he composed the ballad — at least according to the conventions of the dream-vision genre.

Contrary to initial appearances, then, Love, at least in part, serves as a literary defense for both narrator and poet. Moreover, Michael D. Cherniss observes that the god of Love's 'obtuse, censorious attitude must be intended as high comedy'¹⁶ and for readers who recognize this comedy, the god of Love performs a healing role. In this way, Love maintains the potential to impart both harm and healing. Applying this point more broadly, we might observe that the Prologue itself paradoxically serves as a defense of Chaucer's poetry. In addition to the god of Love, at least three other elements are key to this defense: first, the narrator, who functions as a sort of puppet or mask for Chaucer; second, the dream frame, which allows the narrator to abnegate some, if not all, responsibility for the content relayed; and third, literary precedent — that many aspects of the Prologue, including the narrator figure and much of the plot, closely follow French poet Guillaume de Machaut's *Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*. In Machaut's poem, the narrator is put on trial for having defamed ladies in a previous work, *Le Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne*, and is given a punishment to write more love poetry. Arguably, the central aspects of Chaucer's Prologue draw so heavily from Machaut that it might be read as a translation, not unlike the *Romance of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. This approach of building a 'new' poem so completely from the bricks of 'old books' provides yet another mechanism of defense for Chaucer, who to some degree can point to his sources when questioned. Together these elements grant Chaucer a measure of distance and control. 'Thus the poet', William Calin observes, 'while he gives the impression of recanting his earlier works, in fact defends them and his own function as artist with brio.'¹⁷

In other words, Chaucer's work becomes the source of its own cure. Similar to Chaucer's other dream visions, then, the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* presents love and literary practice as 'double', equally capable of healing and harming. This 'doubleness' — what might be described as the persistent both/and presence and neither/nor absence of contradictory opposites — is consistently expressed through paradox and irony and is fundamental to how the Prologue works. Repeatedly alternating between two sides — harming and heal-

¹⁶ Cherniss, 'Chaucer's Last Dream Vision', p. 191.

¹⁷ Calin, 'Machaut's Legacy', p. 35.

ing, for example — creates a circular experience for the reader. On this aspect of the text Kathryn Lynch suggests that 'the feature of paradox that seems most to have intrigued Chaucer, and to have prompted the basic situation and the rhetorical posturing of the *Legend of Good Women*, was its circularity, its endless rotations of self-undermining fact and tradition'.¹⁸ Just as I focus on harming and healing, for example, Lynch focuses on truth and falsehood by exploring the liar paradox which, 'in its purest form, consists of the simple statement, "I am speaking falsely," when the speaker utters that proposition and nothing else.'¹⁹ As we shall see, this circularity is a main feature of the text. It cycles through oppositional pairs, all of which are interconnected if only by the poem itself.

Both of the Prologue's male figures are associated with sight and blindness, providing another example of paradox within the text. Love's face shines so brightly with the light of the sun he wears for a crown that the narrator cannot look at him. Kiser suggests that the sun is important here 'because it describes a Christian epistemological paradox that relates to the work that poets do. The paradox is this: despite people's dependence on truth, for one reason or another they are usually unfit to receive it'.²⁰ Thus, the sight/blindness paradox comments on the wider context of literary practice including the relationship of both author and reader to truth. Further, the narrator observes of Love,

al be that men seyn that blynd ys he, *Although*
 Algate me thoghte that he myghte se; *Nevertheless*
 For sternely on me he gan byholde. (ll. 237–39)

Likewise the narrator: he sees a marvelous vision but with his eyes closed; he relishes the sight of the daisy but has written works that allegedly harm love and women which, following Greek thought, imparts blindness. Addressing this last point more fully, Percival suggests that the *Legend of Good Women* conforms to the palinode form which dates to ancient Greece and traditionally treated the subject of the praise or blame of women or love.

That the ancients clearly recognised that the topos of the 'dispraise of women' only very partially conveyed truth is demonstrated [...] by the punishment of blindness inflicted on the poets who indulged in it, and the restoration of sight when the poets recanted.²¹

¹⁸ Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, p. 116.

¹⁹ Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, p. 114.

²⁰ Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales*, p. 37.

²¹ Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, p. 151.

To right his alleged wrong, our narrator is charged with the task of writing a new poem about women who are good and true. Thus the stated intent of this poem — the *Legend* itself — is to restore, repair, recover — essentially, to heal. Put another way, the present literary work must heal the harmful effects of past literary harms. Through the motif of sight and blindness, which is here implicitly linked to literary practice, the male figures of Love and the narrator are associated with harm but, upon closer evaluation, also healing.

In the case of the Prologue's female figures, I would suggest that the same contradictory doubleness applies but in the opposite formulation; that is, women are overtly associated with healing but, on closer evaluation, also harm. Let us take a closer look at Alceste. At the beginning of the poem, as we have seen, she is associated with healing through the daisy imagery. She is also upheld as a paragon of feminine virtue by the nineteen women who kneel before her and by the narrator who describes her as 'so womanly, so benign, and so meke' (F. 243). As the dream progresses, however, we witness Alceste, 'our alder pris in figuryng' (prize of us all in symbolizing femininity) (F. 298), mounting a strong verbal defense of the narrator. She asks that the god of Love 'never hurte' the narrator (F. 434). As a result, Love puts the narrator in Alceste's hands, making her responsible for meting out his sentence — his judicial punishment. As Louise O. Fradenburg argues, 'Alceste's very excellence, even if what she excels in is pity, makes her as potentially lethal as the God of Love.'²² Further, Nancy Bradley Warren argues that Alceste and many of the *Legend's* women have Amazonian qualities. These qualities, she argues, make Alceste an 'unsettling figure' such that 'one wonders where she might be keeping her knife'.²³ So while Alceste is initially associated with healing and benevolence, the qualities and actions she comes to exhibit align her with punishment and potential malevolence. In the poem, then, both women and men are associated with both harming and healing. Both are shown to be 'double', paradoxically embodying contradictory traits.

One consequence of this doubleness is the destabilization of what it means to be a woman or a man. Throughout the dream Alceste exhibits a range of qualities, many of which are conventionally associated with the masculine. She is at least as confident, direct, intelligent, capable, and powerful as she is

²² Fradenburg, *Sacrifice your Love*, notes further that the word *disteinen* that in the ballad is used in the context of Alceste 'can mean to sully someone's reputation or to desecrate something worthy of honor', (p. 192).

²³ Warren, "'Olde Stories" and Amazons', p. 96.

benign and gentle. In response to the god of Love's accusations against the narrator, she assertively 'goes to war' on the narrator's behalf: 'This man to yow may falsly ben accused | That as by right him oughte ben excused' (F. 350–51). Continuing, she suggests that

perauunter, for this man ys nyce, *perhaps; foolish*
 He myghte doon yt, gessyng no malice, *intending*
 But for he useth thynges for to make
 Hym rekketh noght of what matere he take. *He takes no account* (F. 362–65)

While defending the narrator, Alceste simultaneously instructs the god of Love on conduct proper to one of his station:

A god ne sholde nat thus be agreved,
 But of hys deitee he shal be stable, *deity*
 And therto gracious and merciable. (F. 345–47)

Further, she explains,

For he that kynge or lord ys naturel,
 Hym oghte nat be tiraunt ne crewel
 As is a fermour, to doon the harm he kan. *tax collector* (F. 376–78)

Alceste clearly appropriates power here: she is active and assertive, leading by example while verbally expressing how to lead. Arguably it is Alceste, not the god of Love or the narrator, who wields the greatest degree of power, influence, and agency. If Alceste is unsettling, it is perhaps because aspects of her behaviour challenge overt definitions of feminine virtue and what it means to be 'womanly'.

Simultaneously the god of love and the narrator destabilize what it means to be 'manly'. Whereas Love initially displays mean and tyrannical behaviour toward the narrator, he significantly alters his conduct over the course of the dream. By the end of Alceste's speech, when she admonishes him to never hurt the narrator, Love responds only with acquiescence and respect. In fact, he directly cedes his power to her and forgives all: 'Al lyeth in yow, dooth wyth hym what yow leste. | I al foryeve, withouten lenger space' (F. 449–50). Although the god of Love yields to Alceste, he stops short of kneeling before her, an obeisance the narrator has engaged from the beginning. Indeed, the narrator seems to occupy a position of submission throughout the dream. In addition to kneeling before both Alceste and the god of Love, he addresses them with the respectful titles of 'Madame' (F. 456) and 'Sir' (F. 314), and immediately sets out to follow his literary orders as the Prologue concludes. In the

narrator Elaine Tuttle Hansen further observes 'complex anxieties about the infectious feminization of the Court of Cupid'.²⁴ While the choice of the word 'infectious' is curious given the focus of the present study, I would suggest that a more important point is the bidirectional nature of the game at play. Together these two men and this woman destabilize conventional understandings of gender. If, as Warren claims, 'Women, especially queens, who bear arms, who fight, who move beyond the identities of intercessors and peaceweavers, can no longer serve as a 'guarantor of an apparent masculine subject position' constituent of royal authority because they are no longer 'precisely what men are not',²⁵ then we can formulate a similar statement regarding men; that is, men who acquiesce, especially to women, can no longer serve as guarantors of an apparent feminine subject position. Yet the more important point may be less about feminization and masculinization and more about authority and agency and how these are used.

Perhaps more broadly, then, the Prologue models not how to be a woman or a man but how to be human. One might observe, for example, that Alceste, though assertive and willing to fight for what she believes, remains cooperative, mild, and temperate. Toward the end of the dream, the god of Love and the narrator can be described likewise. All three exhibit agency, the narrator ultimately through writing. Helen Phillips suggests that Chaucer uses the ballad and the legends 'to advocate the importance, for personal and political life, of the principles of kindness, generosity and "faith"'.²⁶ These principles are not associated with any one gender; rather, they reside in the realm of human morality. With Alceste's mandate that the narrator write about 'goode wymmen' (F. 484) and 'false men' (F. 486), the destabilization of gender spills directly into this realm of morality. In the end, the poem seems to suggest that to be human is to be both 'womanly' and 'manly', both 'good' and 'bad'.

The Prologue's moral and gender play may comment on and respond to a very real political, social, literary, and religious context. Lee Patterson contends that 'The *Legend of Good Women* registers Chaucer's desire to escape from subjection to a court, and to aristocratic values generally, that are felt as increasingly tyrannical'.²⁷ Robert R. Edwards would add that 'Cupid brings terrifying monarchical power to bear on the poet's work' and suggests that 'the *Rose* and

²⁴ Hansen, 'The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*', p. 63.

²⁵ Warren, "Olde Stories" and Amazons, p. 77.

²⁶ Chaucer, *Dream Poetry*, ed. by Phillips and Havely, p. 300.

²⁷ Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, p. 237.

the *Troilus* have somehow forced a crisis in English court poetry by laying bare larger social and political anxieties about allegiance and fidelity'.²⁸ As these critical perspectives indicate, a wide-ranging failure of authority is among the most salient features of the cultural context of fourteenth century England. This failure infected nearly every aspect of the cultural system, from politics and social class to religion and medicine. It expressed itself in the form of tyrannical kings, unfair taxation, a breakdown of the feudal system, corrupt popes, and physicians that could not adequately treat plague victims. This cultural context is directly introduced into the imaginary landscape of Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* via the French marguerite tradition. Following this tradition, Alceste almost certainly pays tribute to Queen Anne, rendering the god of Love a likely figure for Richard II. It is this identification of Alceste with Queen Anne and the god of Love with Richard II that creates a unity of opposites within the poem: the interior, imagined, private dream meets and encompasses these exterior, real, public lives. Thus in the meandering, unpredictable, not always logical way of the dream, the Prologue confronts and reflects the reality of its compositional situation. The cultural fragmentation and disunity may well be represented in the Prologue through the various opposites and paradoxes such as woman and man; true and false; sight and blindness. By presenting the whole and the often contradictory parts of which it is made, Chaucer's poem works to cure such fragmentation and disunity via reunification, reassembling, and re-membling. If the curative aim of the *Book of the Duchess* is the black knight's sadness, in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* the curative aim is a cultural milieu's splits and fractures, divisions and disjointings.

Despite the failure of authority in fourteenth-century England — or perhaps because of it — power and loyalty were of paramount concern in literary as well as political, social, and religious contexts. Notions of authorship and patronage, for example, underwent fundamental changes during the fourteenth century.²⁹ Tracing changes in the poetry of Chaucer's French contemporaries Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart, Claire Nouvet observes that

two new figures appear on the literary scene of the fourteenth century: the figure of the professional poet and the corollary figure of the patron of letters. With the emergence of these two figures, literature engages in a distinctive practice of self-reflexivity; representing himself in his text, the professional poet stages his role as

²⁸ Edwards, 'Ricardian Dreamwork', pp. 60 and 66.

²⁹ On this point, it is worth noting that the words 'author' and 'authority' both share the Latin root *auctor*, meaning 'agent'.

well as his patron's role in its creation. A commissioned and remunerative narrative, the text inscribes the social constraints presiding over its composition; it becomes the story of its own production.³⁰

Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, clearly influenced by Machaut and Froissart but also reflecting wider literary trends, includes versions of these two new figures. The narrator plays the part of the professional poet while Alceste is the principal patroness of letters, indicated by her directive to the narrator, 'And whan this book ys maad, yive it the queen, | On my byhalf, at Eltham or at Sheene' (F. 496–97). A royal patroness adds considerable weight to the compositional constraints of any work, and the Prologue appears as no exception. Alceste and the god of Love demand loyalty from the narrator in the form of proper authorial conduct. Where the relationship between a patron and an artist is concerned, power and loyalty dictate, to a greater or lesser degree, the artistic process and product; in this case, the poem.

Perhaps more importantly, the poet and patron are divided figures in the Prologue: the narrator and Chaucer contribute to the figure of the poet while Alceste, the god of Love, and Queen Anne contribute to the figure of the patron. Alceste also acts as a sort of surrogate poet by attempting to exercise a certain amount of agency over the narrator's literary work — its genre, content, and even organization. More specifically, she devises the narrator's writing task as punishment for his perceived transgressions against Love: he is to write

a glorious legend
Of goode wymmen, maydenes and wyves,
That weren trewe in loving al hire lyves;
And telle of false men that hem bytraien. *betrayed* (F. 483–86)

The narrator is also told to 'Speke wel of love' (F. 491) and to begin his legendary with Cleopatra. These relatively strict guidelines administered directly to the narrator not only foreground notions of patronage and authority/authorship, but the very process of literary practice itself; that is, the circumstances, real or imagined, under which a poem comes to be written. Viewed from this perspective, the Prologue not only reflects the social and political circumstances and constraints of its own composition but shows how these constraints are themselves fundamentally fragmented.

The Prologue also reflects on the processes of reading, textual reception, and interpretation as additional factors that necessarily impact literary prac-

³⁰ Nouvet, 'The "Marguerite": A Distinctive Signature', p. 251.

tice. These processes are staged through the dream encounter between Alceste, the god of Love, and the narrator. At its core, the central conflict represented in this encounter concerns textual interpretation. Initially, according to James Simpson, the god of Love attempts to tyrannically control an imagined textual community, occupying an interpretative position that overrides authorial intent.³¹ The specific language of the text simultaneously invites us to read the encounter through a legal lens, which renders Love as judge, Alceste as woman of law, and the narrator as defendant. Ultimately, however, we as readers are the final judges, and we should learn from the god of Love to beware the pitfalls of misinterpretation. On a similar point, Suzanne C. Hagedorn suggests that the *Legend* attempts to guide and instruct the reader

by showing us the interpretive deficiencies of the god of love and leaving us in the hands of an unreliable narrator who doesn't always give this capricious god exactly what he asks for, Chaucer tries to retrain us, his readers, to think for ourselves.³²

We ought to pay attention, for through the processes of interpretation and criticism, readers have the capacity to harm.

Yet these same interpretive processes are potential forces for healing. Reading the Prologue as a courtly game, Percival contends that the text establishes 'a climate of debate which is ludic and recreational in spirit'.³³ Continuing, she indicates that 'The pleasure in fine language, the tearshedding, the laughter and shocked debate caused by Chaucer's stories about women all had high entertainment value for many medieval audiences.'³⁴ Glending Olson has argued a similar point, suggesting that 'literature for pleasure rather than profit was acknowledged, if not venerated, in the Middle Ages'.³⁵ Laughter and play are healing forces for individual readers, audiences, and the social systems to which they belong. In the case of the *Legend of Good Women*, the audience likely contained a high percentage of women. As Catherine Sanok reminds us, 'hagiography was the only genre universally recommended to women in the late Middle Ages, and they took advantage of their access to the tradition to commission texts and translations.'³⁶ It is perhaps the women, both within the text and out-

³¹ Simpson, 'Ethics and Interpretation'.

³² Hagedorn, *Abandoned Women*, p. 186.

³³ Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, p. 322.

³⁴ Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, p. 325.

³⁵ Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 31.

³⁶ Sanok, 'Reading Hagiography', p. 324.

side it — patrons, readers, and literary figures alike — who render the work a potentially healing one. This healing may occur on an individual level through laughter, or on a cultural level through an expressed resistance to antifeminist literature and misogyny. Regarding the latter, Sanok argues that ‘As a genre open to women as readers and patrons, hagiography resists an antifeminist hermeneutic on the level of cultural context.’³⁷ And while healing is one interpretive possibility, we can perhaps only be certain that the text represents different types of readers with varying hermeneutical capacities and a stunning spectrum of apparently viable interpretations.

Even as the Prologue reflects on the political, social, and literary constraints that surround and influence its composition, it simultaneously works to liberate itself by reimagining those constraints. For this the dream form serves as an ideal vehicle by offering medieval poets, in the words of A. C. Spearing, ‘a compositional freedom unusual in their culture.’³⁸ Dreams, by their very nature, are often not ordered, logical, or linear. Chaucer leverages the compositional freedom that accompanies the dream vision to imagine the social and political spheres differently and to redress imbalances. On one level, Alceste’s instructions for the god of Love and her accompanying appropriation of power exemplify how the text reimagines and rebalances a social and political environment that may be in a state of imbalance or disharmony. Taking a broader perspective, the narrator to some extent resists or subverts both the tyrannical authority of the god of Love and Alceste’s attempts to direct the poet along with the form and content of his poem. Irony and paradox are the chief means through which this is accomplished. By resisting sources of authority, both external and internal, the poem itself becomes a locus of power and authority. The poem also works to reunify that which has been split, again through paradox and irony and by simply representing both halves of a whole, even if the halves are left otherwise separate or unresolved. In these ways, the dream-poem offers itself as a remedy for the surrounding political, social, and cultural circumstances out of which it has emerged.

Just as the Prologue reflects a failure of authority in social and political contexts, it also bears the mark of divided religious circumstances that prevailed during the period of its composition. The Avignon papacy and schism of 1378–1415 are two obvious examples of how the institution of religion in the fourteenth century suffered from a fundamental, profound disunion. Arguably, the Prologue and the legends reflect this disunity through double-

³⁷ Sanok, ‘Reading Hagiography’, p. 339.

³⁸ Spearing, ‘Dream Poems’, p. 168.

ness and paradox. Observing the reverse, however, Carolyn Collette contends that the *Legend of Good Women* 'exhibits signs of stress arising from the yoking of two value systems'.³⁹ Collette continues, 'In France and Italy, civic humanism would eventually grow out of the melding of Christianity and classicism'.⁴⁰ While the Prologue may not directly demonstrate the melding of Christianity and classicism, both of these systems are clearly present in the text, perhaps most obviously in the relationship between form and content; that is, while the generic form of a hagiographic legendary is specific to Christianity, the 'good women' that populate these legends are figures from classical mythology. Any attempt to blend classical polytheism with monotheistic Christianity is inherently contradictory; hence, the 'signs of stress' in the text. Where religion is concerned both division and attempted integration are simultaneously present in the poem, a situation that generates a deeply paradoxical work. This self-contradiction operates on the level of genre as well: whereas the Prologue is a dream vision, the legends themselves are hagiography, 'holy writings' that tell the lives of saints. Broadly speaking, the purpose of both genres is didactic but one is interior and private; the other exterior and public. In this way, too, the text expresses and is marked by division.

Hagiography forms part of the cult of the saints which, 'as it emerged in late antiquity', Peter Brown explains, 'became part and parcel of the succeeding millennium of Christian history to such an extent that we tend to take its elaboration for granted'.⁴¹ Saints' days, pilgrimages to shrines, and relics were an integral part of life for Christians during this period; all were carried into the Middle Ages and are recorded in medieval literature in various ways. Pilgrims and pilgrimage, for example, appear in works such as Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman* and *Pearl*, and of course Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In the early Christian church, relics were highly regarded as the physical remains — frequently a body part or, in some cases, the entire body — of a saint or martyr. Clothing or personal items belonging to the holy person might also constitute relics. Relics served various and complex cultural functions during the reign of the cult of the saints. During late antiquity and through the Middle Ages, for example, relics were regularly associated with miracles and were sometimes used as tools of healing.⁴² Unfortunately, by the late Middle Ages relics were

³⁹ Collette, *The Legend of Good Women*, p. x.

⁴⁰ Collette, *The Legend of Good Women*, p. x.

⁴¹ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, p. 1.

⁴² For more on healing in the context of saints, see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, pp. 113–20.

also used as instruments of extortion by corrupt church officials, as Chaucer's Pardoner so colourfully shows:

For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,	<i>bag; pillow-case</i>
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;	<i>veil</i>
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl	<i>piece of the sail</i>
That Seint Peter had, whan that he wente	
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.	<i>caught him</i>
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,	<i>brass</i>
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.	
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond	
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,	<i>poor parson</i>
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye	
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;	<i>two</i>
And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,	<i>false flattery and tricks</i>
He made the person and the peple his apes.	<i>fools</i> (l. 694–706)

While the Pardoner in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* shows depraved church officials profiting from relics, here I wish to explore how the relic functions metaphorically within the *Legend of Good Women*.

In the Prologue to the legends, relics are directly mentioned only once, when the god of Love calls Alceste 'my relyke, digne and delytable' (my relic, honourable and delightful) (F. 321).⁴³ Love's comment may be interpreted any number of ways; from a desire to claim or own Alceste to a simple expression of favor. There is no evidence that he intends to misuse his relic, however, which distinguishes him from the corrupt pardoner. Love's remark might also convey a comparatively untainted notion of relics as objects of veneration and instruments of healing. By referring to her as his relic, then, the god of Love reinforces the association between Alceste and healing that has already been established through the daisy imagery.

Both the relic reference and the daisy imagery further associate Alceste with life after death or rebirth, reinforced by the narrator's earlier use of the word 'resurrection' to describe the daisy he loves to see in the meadow:

My besy gost, that thurseteth alwey newe	<i>eager spirit; thirsts</i>
To seen this flour so yong, so fressh of hewe,	
Constreyned me with so gledy desir	<i>burning desire</i>
That in myn herte I feelee yet the fir	
That made me to ryse er yt were day —	<i>before it was</i>

⁴³ While the word carries multiple definitions, the hagiographic context warrants this reading.

And this was now the firste morwe of May —
 With dredful hert and glad devocioun,
 For to ben at the resureccioun
 Of this flour. (F. 103–11)

A medieval Christian audience would naturally associate the word 'resurrection' with Christ. As it is used in this passage, then, the word introduces Christ to the existing web of connotations associated with the daisy and Alceste. Other aspects of the passage support this introduction, such as the words 'spirit' and 'devotion', along with mention of the date, 1 May, which cannot be long after Easter. In addition, by describing his heart burning with desire, the narrator aligns himself with medieval mystics including Richard Rolle and Teresa of Avila who used similar images to explain their intense love for and union with God. In *Incendium amoris* (*The Fire of Love*), Rolle writes, 'Mor haue I mervayled þen I schewe, fforsothe, when I felt first my hert wax warme, and treuly, not ymagynynghly, bot als it were with sensibyll fyre, byrned'.⁴⁴ The fire of love Rolle feels in his heart foregrounds the place where the physical body and spiritual love meet.⁴⁵ Similarly, the relic occupies this place where body meets spirit. By figuring Alceste as a relic and underscoring her association with Christ via resurrection, then, the Prologue foregrounds the intersection of physical body and spirit.

On a related point, Carolyn Walker Bynum observes that 'the cult of relics not only abolished a distinction between spirit and matter; in giving terrifying power to bone and sinew, it forced a new look at what it meant for every human to *be* a body'.⁴⁶ This point begs the question, where is the physical body in the text of the *Legend of Good Women*? It seems strangely present only in its obvious absence. In the Prologue's dream Alceste is described only by her daisy-like clothing and the ballad cleverly avoids all description of her. Love's odd reference to the living Alceste as his relic is equally evasive in its presentation of a spiritualized physicality. 'The omission of physical description', Sheila Delany suggests,

seems a clue to the poet's subversive intention. He refuses to titillate the reader with a conventional catalogue of female charms, or to fragment the natural human body and hand it over, in fetishized form, on a silver platter of rhetoric.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Rolle, *The Fire of Love*, ed. by Harvey, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Its appearance introduces to the Prologue the mystic's direct experience of a Christian God which contrasts with and perhaps indirectly challenges the authoritative pagan god of Love.

⁴⁶ Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 255.

⁴⁷ Delany, *The Naked Text*, p. 92.

Indeed, by refusing to offer detailed descriptions of — and thereby refusing to fragment — the female physical body, the text would bring about wholeness, even if it is an absent wholeness. Likewise the narrator's physical body is entirely absent in the Prologue, perhaps suggesting a degree of solidarity between him and the women whose stories he tells. Moreover, by comparing Chaucer's first dream vision with his last, we might observe that in both cases the physical body plays a central role in textual meaning and purpose, but that role is quite different in each case. In the *Book of the Duchess*, as I argued in an earlier chapter, a detailed description of Blanche's physical body serves to resurrect and memorialize her. In the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, the ironic absence of the physical body arguably empowers not only women but also the narrator. By constructing a text that avoids all description of women's beauty and charms, the poet subverts the conventions of courtly love poetry that may be interpreted by some as antifeminist. He may also reclaim some measure of agency by defying, or executing in his own way, the explicit instructions of his patroness to write of good women.⁴⁸ By refusing to participate in cultural conventions that would objectify, subjugate, fragment, or otherwise harm any party involved in the literary process, the visionary Prologue facilitates an underlying textual function of re-membering, thereby bringing about wholeness and healing.

In the legends, physical description of the women is likewise entirely lacking yet here the absence of the body perhaps more importantly points to sacrifice. Death pervades this 'martyrology of love',⁴⁹ often in the form of suicide and murder at the hands of the women themselves. While Christian martyrs, the typical subjects of hagiographic legends, sacrificed their lives for their religious or spiritual beliefs, the women featured in Chaucer's legends sacrifice for carnal love. This contrast highlights, among other things, the fundamentally paradoxical enterprise of attempting to craft hagiography from classical figures whose lives are far from 'exemplary' as judged through a Christian lens. On another level the legends serve to resurrect those whose stories are told in the same way that Blanche is physically resurrected and memorialized in the *Book of the Duchess*; however, the women of Chaucer's legendary are not resurrected

⁴⁸ McGrady, 'What is a Patron?', observes a similar dynamic in the case of Christine de Pizan and her patron: 'By reconceptualizing the poet-patron relationship, Christine de Pizan and the Harley workshop transformed the patron's traditional power over literary creation into evidence of the writer's authority and, as a result, replaced the image of a court entertainer with that of an author' (p. 213).

⁴⁹ The phrase is from Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales*, p. 94.

physically. The paradox, then, remains: these stories of carnal love lack the direct presence of physical bodies. Further, because the legends tell of sacrifice and death, they also serve as tombs: the dead are preserved, or buried, in the text. In this way the poem encompasses the cycle of death and rebirth which is to some extent enacted by the two compositions that together comprise the *Legend of Good Women*, the legendary and the dream-vision Prologue. While the legends tell of death, the Prologue and Alceste are associated with rebirth, resurrection, and Christ.

Alceste is also associated with saints and sainthood through healing and the relic reference. In addition, the French word for daisy, *marguerite*, can mean a saint in heaven, after Saint Margaret.⁵⁰ Paradoxically, however, the women who populate the legends are not identified as saints. Following the Latin inscription located at the beginning and end of each legend, the women featured in the first five legends (Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle and Medea, and Lucrece) are martyrs while the last four women (Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis, and Hypermnestra) are given no identifying categorization. As we progress through the poem, then, it is as if we are descending the ladder of canonization.⁵¹ 'Saint Alceste' is followed by six women who are identified as martyrs, who in turn are followed by four women identified as neither martyr nor saint. The apparent randomness of how each woman is categorized may be part of the point. Further upsetting the order of things, generic form and content do not match. Alceste, the figure in the poem who is most associated with sainthood, appears in the Prologue, a dream vision that serves to introduce the hagiographic legends, while the legends themselves tell only of martyrs and others without assigned canonical status.

Read in this way, the poem traces a pattern of descent from saint to martyr to the absence of canonical status, which takes us to the sacrificial death of the text itself. Whether or not Chaucer intentionally leaves his text unfinished, the result remains unchanged; that is, by cutting his legendary short, Chaucer figuratively refuses resurrection and remembrance to those women whose stories he does not tell, all in one final lift of his pen. Viewing authorship as a creative act, Chaucer commits in the realm of literary practice the equivalent of what many of his heroines commit in the realm of love. He effec-

⁵⁰ As Guillaume de Machaut mentions in his poem *Dit de la Fleur et de la Marguerite*.

⁵¹ Delany, *The Naked Text*, provides relevant context on the process of conferring martyr versus saint status and how it changed from the early Christian era through Chaucer's day, concluding that there 'is some flexibility in the concept of sainthood' (p. 65).

tively murders his own creative offspring, the text, while cutting short his own life as author of that text. In this darkly whimsical way, both text and author are sacrificed. Martyrdom and sacrifice are applied to literary practice themselves. Self-sacrifice in the realm of literary practice, the unfinished text says, may be preferable to incurring or committing other types of potential harm. Chaucer thereby aligns himself with many of the women about whom he does write. Reaching beyond gender boundaries and misogyny, the sacrificed text shows the deep interweaving of all the threads that together constitute literary practice, from past, present, and future to poet, narrator, patron, audience, and characters. Extending this interpretive thread, we might read the text itself as a relic. Not only does *Alceste* extend the identification of relic to the daisy, pearl, dream, and text by the same symbolic transfer discussed throughout this chapter, but the text itself has been sacrificed or martyred. In this sense, we are invited to view the text as physical remains that maintain the power to heal.

Given that the dream is integral to the overall function of the poem, it is interesting to note how the F and G versions of the Prologue end differently. In the F version, the narrator does not specify the conclusion of his dream. Directly following the instructions given to the narrator regarding the poem he is to write, the final lines read, 'And with that word my bokes gan I take, | And right thus on my *Legende gan I make*' (F. 578–79). The narrator does not tell us when or whether he has woken, which effectively blurs the boundary between dream and waking consciousness. Whether intentional or not, this allows the mode, associations, and effects of the dream to bleed into the legends. In contrast, the G version offers a clear end to the narrator's dream. The last two lines read, 'And with that word, of slep I gan awake, | And right thus on my *Legende gan I make*' (G. 544–45). Establishing a sharp distinction between dreaming and waking in this way facilitates reading the poem as two distinct parts — the dream-vision Prologue and the hagiographic legends — that together make two halves of a whole.

From this broader perspective of the whole, then, the point may not be feminization and masculinization, harming and healing, good and bad, true and false, and so forth; rather, it is all of these and none of these. That is, the poem is less concerned with any one part or pair and more with presenting the whole. The dream directly serves this purpose by providing a means through which fragmentation may be reassembled or re-membered. The poem relentlessly seeks wholeness or totality. Neither the Prologue nor the legends are uniformly healing or harmful, for example, but both simultaneously. One without the other would be partial or fragmentary but together they construct a yin-yang-like circle, a complete unit. Although Chaucer's preceding dream-poems dance

with the idea of how to present such a whole,⁵² none achieves it to the degree of the *Legend of Good Women*. This attempt to represent the whole, through remembering fragmentary parts, works to reinstate balance for the benefit of all those involved in the scope of literary practice including narrator, poet, patron, readers, and characters as well as the surrounding political, social, and religious context.

⁵² In an earlier chapter I suggest that the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls* together function as a unit much like I suggest here that the Prologue and legends work together.

RAVISHING THE DREAM: THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

W e turn now to the *Canterbury Tales* and the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale. It seems the Monk's series of tragic tales will drag on endlessly until the Knight finally interrupts him with, 'namoore of this!' (l. 2767). Hearing about so many sudden falls from 'welthe and ese' (l. 2772), the knight explains, has caused him 'greet disese' (l. 2771). None of the pilgrims object. The Knight's remarks suggest that language and storytelling have the power to affect an audience negatively by transmitting feelings of pain or dis-ease. Indeed, the Host declares that complaining cannot cure the past:

no remedie
It is for to biwaille ne compleyne *bewail*
That is doon, and als it is a peyne,
As ye han seyde, to heere of hevynesse. *sadness* (ll. 2784–87)

The Host's comments pertain not only to the Monk, who laments past events, real or fictive, but also to the knight, who complains about the Monk's recent lamenting. Seeking an antidote to the Monk's racking chronicles and the Knight's pressing complaints, the Host commands the Priest to 'Telle us swich thing as may oure hertes glade' (l. 2810). Implying that language and storytelling are equally capable of bringing happiness to an audience, the Host's request validates the notion that literary pursuits may aid well being. In its entirety, the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale presents a variation of that simple formulation we have encountered so frequently throughout this study: that language and literary practice possess dual powers, to wound and to heal. By speaking to this double potential, the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale gives us some indi-

cation of what is to come. That is, if the Monk's tale has caused some measure of distress, then we might expect the Nun's Priest's tale to bring some measure of pleasure.¹

The Prologue also gestures toward the broader roles medicine and language will play in the tale itself. Medicine and medical matters reappear immediately in the opening frame of the Nun's Priest's Tale that details the widow and her farm. Just a dozen lines into the poem, we learn the particulars of the widow's diet. Her meals are lean, she does not overeat (l. 2837), and she has no need for 'poynaunt sauce' (spicy sauce) or 'deyntee morsel' (ll. 2834–35): 'Attempree diete was al hir phisik, | And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce' (A moderate diet was her only medicine | And exercise, and heart's sufficiency) (ll. 2838–40). As a result of her dietary and exercise habits, the widow is apparently free of disease: 'The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce, | N'apoplexie shente nat hir heed' (The gout did not prevent her from dancing, | Nor did apoplexy ruin her head) (ll. 2840–41). Diet and exercise, the cornerstones of Greek medical practice, are discussed at length in such works as Hippocrates' *Regimen*.² Along with the widow here, the General Prologue portrait of the Doctour of Phisik suggests that diet and exercise were equally important for medieval medicine:

Of his diete mesurable was he, *moderate*
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible. (ll. 435–37)

By telling of the widow's diet and exercise regimen, the Priest extends the theme of medicine introduced in the Prologue, moving it into the next of the tale's fictional layers while factually following Greek medical authority and medieval medical practice.³ Both metaphoric and scientific modes of representation are used throughout the Nun's Priest's Tale to address medical and literary as well as oneiric matters.

¹ Similarly addressing the importance of the Prologue, Jensen, "Winkers" and "Janglers", claims that 'neither the *Monk's Tale* nor the *Nun's Priest's Tale* is complete in itself, but, when read through the link that joins them, the entire unit achieves closure' (p. 183).

² The translation of Greek and Arabic medical and scientific texts commenced in the twelfth century. For a general introduction to this and related topics, see Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*.

³ For relevant information on medieval medicine and medical practice, see French, *Medicine Before Science*; Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England*; Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England*; Talbot, 'Medicine'; Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith*; Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages*; Ussery, *Chaucer's Physician*; and Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*, pp. 323–407.

It has often been observed that the Nun's Priest's Tale constitutes what Helen Cooper terms 'the *Canterbury Tales* in miniature'.⁴ Using a variety of means,⁵ the Nun's Priest's Tale also acts as a comical gloss on individual tales, on the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole, and on some of Chaucer's works that came before it.⁶ In this chapter, I suggest that the Nun's Priest's Tale, likely written late in Chaucer's career,⁷ testifies to an evolution in the poet's thought regarding language, medicine, and dreams. In the Nun's Priest's Tale, as in other poems featured throughout this study, language functions as a dual force, with the potential to both wound and heal; however, in the Nun's Priest's Tale, rhetoric, in the form of persuasive speech, literally saves Chauntecleer's life. Here, the potential of language to remedy supersedes its potential to harm. Meanwhile, the medicine and dreams that appear in the Nun's Priest's Tale no longer play curative roles as in the dream visions. Chauntecleer's dream foretells his imminent encounter with the fox, yet neither the dream itself nor Pertelote's interpretive diagnosis prevent the encounter from occurring. Rather, dreams and medicine are merely two points in a constellation of subjects that together comprise the story — subjects ranging from hermeneutics, courtly love, and anti-feminism to rhetoric, philosophy, literary authority, and history.

Diagnosing the Dream

Within the black and white yard of the widow spins the technicolour world of the rooster Chauntecleer and his favorite hen Pertelote. Chauntecleer is proud, salacious, uxorious, and crows with a voice and regularity to match no other cock in all the land. That these attributes accurately follow medieval scientific understanding of the rooster grounds Chauntecleer in 'factual' perceptions, however comical his description may otherwise be.⁸ One day, 'This

⁴ Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 350.

⁵ Ranging from allusions to incorporating multiple genres (beast-fable, mock-heroic, sermon) and subject matter from other works.

⁶ Boyd, 'Chauntecleer and the Eagle', for example, draws parallels between Chauntecleer and the *House of Fame's* eagle, while Johnson, "'To Make in Som Comedy'", compares Chauntecleer and Troilus.

⁷ Although the tale references Jack Straw (l. 3394), a key figure involved in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, Derek Pearsall observes that this reference does not necessarily help with dating the piece. 'since the tale was evidently composed when the scheme of the *Tales* was well matured' (Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Pearsall, p. 29).

⁸ Steadman, 'Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History', traces each attribute to such source authors as Aristotle, Pliny, Albertus, Augustine, Bartholomeus, and Alexander Neckam.

Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte, | As man that in his dreem is drecched soore' (ll. 2886–87). Waking her husband, Pertelote asks, 'What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?' (l. 2890). Chauntecleer's 'ailing' extends the medical theme introduced in the link and frame and prepares us for Pertelote's lengthy diagnosis and prescription. 'Now God,' Chauntecleer says, 'My swevene recche aright' (Interpret my dream correctly) (l. 2896). While literally conveying Chauntecleer's understanding that his dream requires interpretation, his response itself requires interpretation. Is it a prayer addressed to God, an oath directed to Pertelote, or both? Unbeknownst to Chauntecleer, his request reaches a far wider audience, pilgrims and readers alike, who are apt to undertake the task of interpreting his dream and his language with varying degrees of exactitude.

Our attempts to interpret Chauntecleer's language might begin with the many connotations of the phrase 'recche aright'. The verb 'recche' can mean to narrate, explain, pursue, interpret, teach, or reach out, while the adverb 'aright' means in a correct, just, or proper way.⁹ For both of these words, we must not only decide which definition is itself correct, just, favorable, or proper but also how 'interpret correctly', or 'explain favorably', to name two interpretive possibilities of the phrase, are themselves defined and achieved. Already, we are challenged with multiple interpretive tasks, and the tale will continue to foreground the interpretative process. As if his 'recche aright' request weren't enough, Chauntecleer adds, 'And kepe my body out of foul prisoun!' (l. 2897). The direct reference to Chauntecleer's physical body here and again several lines later keeps alive the medical theme and further lays the foundation for Pertelote's forthcoming diagnoses. Moreover, the light humour of this remark establishes a causal connection between correct interpretation and Chauntecleer's ability to avoid imprisonment, or perhaps death expressed as a figurative imprisonment within the fox's stomach ('foul prisoun'). Equally, the remark connects correct interpretation with avoiding a miserable ('foul') loss of freedom ('prisoun'). In other words, Chauntecleer's statement figuratively suggests that his life and/or freedom depend on the correct interpretation of his dream. While the overt subject of interpretation is dreams, the implied subject necessarily includes language: the very task with which the reader is engaged.

Chauntecleer proceeds to tell Pertelote of his dream: roaming up and down within the yard, he saw a beast that wanted to seize his body and kill him. Chauntecleer's description of his dream is worth remarking. Instead of saying he dreamt of an orange fox, for example, he says the creature 'Was lyk an

⁹ See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *aright*, v.

hound' (ll. 2899–2900) and its 'colour was bitwixe yellow and reed' (l. 2902). Chauntecleer's descriptions capture an attempt to translate dream images into words without imposing any definite interpretation on those images. His narration more specifically demonstrates how translation and interpretation are both required to distill meaning from dreams. We should also note that Chauntecleer claims no personal responsibility for the interpretation of his dream, leaving the task entirely to Pertelote and anyone else who may be listening.

Pertelote has no difficulty offering her interpretation of the dream, but not before shaming Chauntecleer for being such a coward to fear dreams: 'Allas! And konne ye been agast of swevenys? | Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is' (Alas! Can you be afraid of dreams? | God knows, there is nothing but vanity in dreams) (ll. 2921–22). Discerning Pertelote's opinion of dreams once again depends heavily on interpretation, here of the word 'vanitee' which in Middle English might mean that which is worthless or illusory; pride or arrogance; foolishness or madness; fantasy or falsehood; or even that which does not exist.¹⁰ This range of possibilities nonetheless gives us a good indication of Pertelote's general attitude toward dreams. As she begins to address Chauntecleer's dream more specifically, Pertelote reveals her impressive knowledge of contemporary medicine and science,¹¹ knowledge that will form the basis of her approach to dream interpretation:

Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,	<i>Dreams; by overeating</i>
And ofte of fume and of complecciouns,	<i>by vapours</i>
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.	<i>are too abundant; person</i> (ll. 2923–25)

Dreams, Pertelote claims, are nothing more than the result of a humoral imbalance, or the products of overeating. Essentially, Pertelote sees Chauntecleer's dream as a means to diagnose the condition of his body, an approach to dream interpretation that follows the opening assertion of Galen's short treatise entitled *On Diagnosis from Dreams*: 'The dream can indicate for us the condition of the body.'¹² This approach also echoes the physiological view of dreams expressed by Aristotle in the *Parva naturalia*. A similar understanding of dreams is presented in the works of physicians considered authorities

¹⁰ See the *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *vanitē* (n.).

¹¹ Aiken, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Dame Pertelote's Knowledge of Medicine'. Aiken has shown that Pertelote's knowledge of medicine traces directly to the *Speculum naturale* and the *Speculum doctrinale* of Vincent of Beauvais.

¹² Oberhelman, 'Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*', p. 43.

during the Middle Ages including Rhazes, Arnoldus de Villanova, and Petrus de Abano.¹³ By contrast, the Asclepian school understood the dream to function either as the cure itself, or as the ‘vehicle for the cure, in that its visual or verbal contents indicate to the dreamer specific psychological or physiological regimens.’¹⁴ In the former approach, the dream serves to diagnose; in the latter approach, the dream serves to cure.

As she continues, Pertelote reasons that Chauntecleer’s dream is due to an excess of red choleric humour,

Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
 Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes, *arrows; red flames*
 Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,
 Of kontek, and of whelpes, grete and lyte. *Strife* (2929–32)

Pertelote’s diagnosis accurately follows medieval scientific and medical authorities in at least two respects. First, it expresses the ‘belief that the cock was by nature a choleric animal, hot and dry in complexion.’¹⁵ Second, it identifies the types of dream images that result from a choleric imbalance; specifically, fire with red flames, red beasts, and strife (ll. 2926–32).¹⁶ Based on her interpretation-as-diagnosis, Pertelote proceeds to prescribe herbs for Chauntecleer’s conditions, once again following medieval medical knowledge. ‘I shal myself to herbes techen yow,’ she says, ‘That shul been for youre hele and for youre | prow’ (ll. 2949–50):

A day or two ye shul have digestyves
 Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves
 Of lawriol, centaure, and fumetere, *spurge laurel, centaury; fumaria*
 Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there, *bellebore*
 Of katapuce, or of gaitrys beryis, *caper-spurge, buckthorn*
 Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd. *ground ivy* (ll. 2961–66)

Curry further argues that Pertelote ‘has been reading after the physicians’ and follows their understanding about the proper order in which to administer the

¹³ For a thorough overview of medical perspectives on humours and dreams, see Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, pp. 221–25.

¹⁴ Oberhelman, ‘The Interpretation of Prescriptive Dreams in Ancient Greek Medicine’, p. 419.

¹⁵ Steadman, ‘Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History’, p. 237.

¹⁶ For an excellent overview of sources that address these topics, see Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, pp. 222–26.

herbs.¹⁷ Yet Pauline Aiken suggests that Pertelote 'evidently prefers to err on the side of inclusiveness, since these remedies will purge her husband not only of *colera*, red and black, but of phlegm as well'.¹⁸ Pertelote's overprescription may border on dangerous and adds an element of wit to the debate between husband and wife, thereby contributing to the gender war that wages through many of the pilgrims' tales, including those of the Monk, Second Nun, and Wife of Bath. In this manner, the subjects of medicine, dreams, and literary endeavour (including hermeneutics) are situated within a web of other themes and tales. Central to this web of interconnections is the medical and scientific knowledge Pertelote uses to diagnose Chauntecleer's dream and to prescribe antidotes.

Although Pertelote's medical and scientific facts conform to medieval understanding in a seemingly straightforward manner, the dream context complicates matters. Medical authorities from Hippocrates and Galen to Avicenna used dreams to diagnose the condition of the body and often of the mind; here, however, Pertelote argues that dreams are empty of interpretive, and perhaps prophetic, significance *because* they derive from the body. In this respect, Pertelote voices an opinion of dreams quite valid in the fourteenth century. Yet none of this answers Chauntecleer's request for an interpretation of his dream.

The Nun's Priest's Tale is informed by a primary medieval literary source on dreams, namely Robert Holcot's *Super sapientiam Salomonis*, a work that dates to the fourteenth century.¹⁹ As Robert Pratt has shown, Holcot devotes a large portion of his *lectio* 103 to the intricacies of divination through dreams.²⁰ Holcot first lists three sources of 'significant dreams': body, mind, and heavenly bodies.²¹ He then explores whether divination through dreams is allowable, concluding that '(1) divination through dreams is permissible on occasion; (2) such divination is not to be expected with regard to all dreams; (3) such divination is very hazardous'.²² If the first two conclusions testify to the ambiguity that necessarily characterizes dream interpretation, the final conclusion

¹⁷ Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, p. 225.

¹⁸ Aiken, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Dame Pertelote's Knowledge of Medicine', p. 284.

¹⁹ Robert A. Pratt provides a detailed comparison of the two works in Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams'.

²⁰ That Holcot was concerned more broadly with divine absolute power adds further significance to his influence in this tale.

²¹ Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', pp. 540–41. Two more sources of significant dreams are later added, namely, good and evil spirits.

²² Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', p. 541.

regarding the hazardous nature of dream divination is pertinent to the medical context of the Nun's Priest's Tale. Deftly uniting the themes of medicine and dreams, Chaucer here comically exposes the hazardous potential of oneiric (mis)interpretation, with Pertelote's factually correct but contextually incorrect 'diagnosis' and her overprescription of herbs.

By incorporating diverse oneiric theories, as well as a broad range of scientific, medical, and literary sources on dreams, the Nun's Priest's Tale reveals inherent contradictions among them. With the dream debate between Pertelote and Chauntecleer the poem represents often conflicting viewpoints without endorsing any one in particular; meanwhile, it spawns a host of interpretive challenges. To provide a further example, Pertelote's remarks regarding Chauntecleer's dream are correct if the dream is classified as an *insomnium* following Macrobius — a dream that 'may be caused by mental or physical distress'²³ — or a *somnium naturale* following Petrus de Abano — a dream that 'originates in the dominion of bodily complexions and humours'.²⁴ Macrobius deems *insomnium* unworthy of interpretation, and Petrus de Abano claims that the *somnium naturale* 'seems to have very little significance, or none at all; it is for the most part an illusion'.²⁵ Apparently following such authoritative opinion, Pertelote openly disregards Chauntecleer's dream as vanity, but then proceeds to offer an interpretation in the form of diagnosis. Widening the interpretive lens further, we may observe that Pertelote's approach to Chauntecleer's dream bears quite heavily on the poem itself; however, to formulate any opinion regarding this approach would be to interpret a situation — a text — concerning a dream that, according to many prominent medieval dream theorists, is not worth interpreting. Just as we are left to determine which system of dream classification to use, we must also decide whether the chicken follows the egg or vice versa; that is, whether interpretation directs classification, or classification directs interpretation. The Nun's Priest's Tale consistently raises such problematic questions on a startling range of matters from medicine and dreams to astrology, history, rhetoric, and divine foreknowledge, and seems to force the reader to seek answers while simultaneously preventing the possibility of reaching definitive conclusions.

An ideal illustration of this point can be found in Pertelote's single diversion from her medical and scientific hermeneutic; that is, her citation of the first

²³ Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by Stahl, p. 88.

²⁴ As suggested in Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, p. 220.

²⁵ These phrases are quoted in Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, pp. 207–08.

portion of a proverb attributed to Cato: 'Ne do no forse of dremes' (Attach no importance to dreams) (l. 2941). Some manuscripts with marginal glosses trace the quote to Cato's distich 2. 31. Yet again, Pertelote and Chaucer are apparently following Holcot, who, as Pratt contends, had not quoted couplet 2. 31 of the *Disticha* which flourished under the title or name of 'Cato': 'Somnia ne cures, nam mens humana quod optat, | Dum vigilat, sperat, per somnium cernit id ipsum.' Instead he had cited a line which has the same wording that he used — or nearly the same — in a number of medieval manuscripts: 'Sompnia ne cures, nam fallunt sompnia plures.'²⁶ Adding to the confusion, Chaucer, like Holcot, omits at least half of the quote attributed to Cato. Thus Pertelote is left with the first three words (translated) and the reader is left with a substantial gap to fill. 'Since', as E. Talbot Donaldson observes, 'the scholarly mind naturally abhors a vacuum of this sort,'²⁷ readers seem compelled to fill the void with all manner of interpretations. For Paul R. Thomas, the translated phrase 'for dreams deceive many' is simply a longer version of the tag quoted by Pertelote, and the distich referenced is 2. 31: 'Don't pay attention to dreams; for, during the time the mind is awake, it desires that for which it hopes, and it perceives that thing itself during sleep.' 'Clearly', Thomas concludes, 'Cato is not speaking of Chauntecleer's sort of dream.'²⁸

Yet whether or not Cato speaks of 'Chauntecleer's sort of dream' depends entirely on whether and how we fill the gap left by Pertelote and how we interpret the resulting quote. It is possible that the ambiguity of Pertelote's partial quotation, together with the impossibility of ascertaining the reference, is itself the point. Language, like dreams, offers an imprecise semiotic system requiring constant interpretation and therefore creating the possibility of constant misinterpretation. As Constance B. Hieatt observes, Chaucer warns us 'not to over-simplify. In the case of dream interpretation, he makes us witness the fallibility of those who think they know all the answers.'²⁹

Pertelote, for example, seems to know all the answers. Yet while her medical diagnosis is intrinsically sound enough to recommend remedies for a choleric imbalance, her extrinsic application of medical knowledge — her prescription of herbs based on Chauntecleer's dream and her interpretation of the dream as unworthy of further interpretation — could prove fatal: if the herbs don't kill

²⁶ Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', p. 545.

²⁷ Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer*, p. 146.

²⁸ Thomas, 'Cato on Chauntecleer', pp. 279–80. See also Hazelton, 'Chaucer and Cato'.

²⁹ Hieatt, 'The Dreams of Troilus, Criseyde, and Chauntecleer', pp. 409–10.

Chauntecleer, the fox might. Translation and interpretation may yield meaning, the tale suggests, but they are not guaranteed to yield correct meaning. By interlacing language, dreams, interpretation, and medicine in such a way, the Nun's Priest's Tale constantly alters itself and the perspectives it presents. If works such as the *House of Fame* and *Parliament of Fowls* show the double nature of dreams and literary endeavour, then the Nun's Priest's Tale shows the multidimensional nature of dreams, literary endeavour, and all that can be contained within them. In this way the Nun's Priest's Tale stages an interpretive conundrum begging us to wake up to the absurdity — and profundity — of its incurable ambiguity. If we do wake up, we are able to laugh at ourselves for laboring so intensely to separate 'fruyt' from 'chaf'.

Chauntecleer's Rebuttal

In response to Pertelote's diagnosis, and what amounts to her dismissal of his dream, Chauntecleer begins by attacking her reference to Cato. 'By God', he counters,

men may in olde bookes rede
 Of many a man moore of auctorite
 Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee, *I swear*
 That al the revers seyn of this sentence, *opposite*
 And han wel founded by experience
 That dremes been significaciouns
 As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns
 That folk endure in this lif present. (ll. 2974–81)

Chauntecleer points to authorities who claim that dreams contain valuable truths. This debate between Chauntecleer and Pertelote concerning dreams can be figured in at least three ways. First, in contrast to Pertelote's scientific and medical perspective, Chauntecleer endorses literary authority. Second, while Pertelote's statements are true for a dream classified as a *somnium naturale* or *insomnium*, Chauntecleer's statements are true for the *somnium coeleste* or *visio*. Finally, Victor M. Hamm argues that Pertelote can be seen to represent the Platonic tradition on dreams, and Chauntecleer the Aristotelian;³⁰ however, the poem precludes such neat categorization due to Pertelote's physiological perspective. 'Both', in any case, 'are limited ways of knowing; neither is definitively superior to the other.'³¹ As the dream disquisition between hen and cock

³⁰ Hamm, 'Chaucer: "Heigh Ymaginacioun"', pp. 394–95.

³¹ McAlpine, 'The Triumph of Fiction in the Nun's Priest's Tale', p. 86.

continues to unfold, it exposes an impressive range of epistemological and classificatory difficulties that plague interpretative endeavour itself. Again, the tale not only shows that one dream can be correctly categorized according to various classification systems, but that classification itself is inseparable from the interpretive process. In fact, classification may be the first step of the interpretive process.

Further, the opening sequence of the dream debate between Pertelote and Chauntecleer seems concerned with more than interpretation. Layered throughout is a commentary on courtly love. In conventional courtly love literature, such as the *Lais* of Marie de France, women are typically praised for beauty while men are lauded for character traits such as loyalty and valor. At least in the case of men, these conventions are understandable in the context of behavioural social codes such as those binding a knight. The Nun's Priest's Tale, however, begins with a description of Chauntecleer that follows the rules for describing a beautiful woman according to Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*. Pertelote is then described not in terms of appearance, but in terms of behaviour: 'Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire, | And compaignable, and bar hyrself so faire' (ll. 2871–72). By identifying Chauntecleer by his physical appearance instead of his demeanor and Pertelote by her demeanor instead of her physical appearance, the Nun's Priest's Tale inverts gender conventions of traditional courtly love literature.

This inversion of courtly love conventions continues with Pertelote's remark that Chauntecleer has lost her heart because she cannot love a coward who is afraid of a mere dream. She proceeds to list more specifically what women want in their men:

We alle desiren, if it myghte bee,
To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,
And secree — and no nygard, ne no fool, *discreet; miser*
Ne hym that is agast of every tool,
Ne noon avauntour, by that God above! *boaster* (ll. 2913–17)

Pertelote's demand for a discreet and generous husband is somewhat misguided, for these are qualities not of a husband but of a courtly lover.³² Pertelote concludes her remarks by asking Chauntecleer, 'Have ye no mannes herte?' (l. 2920), followed directly by, 'And konne ye been agast of swevenys?' (And can you be afraid of dreams?) (l. 2921). Implying that 'real roosters' are not afraid of dreams, the tale places conventions of gender directly and laughably

³² As noted in Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Pearsall, p. 160.

in the context of dream theory and interpretation. This juxtaposition serves to reinforce the tale's challenge to courtly love formulas, oneiric theory, and conventional hermeneutic processes alike.

Moreover, the tale simultaneously remedies and worsens anti-feminist sentiment. That Pertelote appears to be in control, telling her husband not only how to understand and react to his dream but also how to behave as a man, brings to mind the Wife of Bath. Given the course of events in the Nun's Priest's Tale, we must reconsider the practical implications of the Wife's contention that women want sovereignty. Yet Pertelote never tells Chauntecleer directly what to do about his dream. That would make her more responsible for the ensuing events; instead, she simply offers her interpretations, prescriptions, and opinions. From one perspective, then, the figure of Pertelote may be read as an attempt to 'remedy' the negative impact of courtly love and anti-feminist literature; from another, her remarks may elicit a response that tends toward misogyny. From one perspective, Chauntecleer attempts to give women the sovereignty that the Wife of Bath claims they want; from another, he seems to suffer from what has been termed the 'Eve complex', blaming women for all. As the tale progresses, it seems to present as confounding a range of perspectives on gender as it does on dreams.

The Priest himself aggravates gendered aspects of the tale with such comments as:

My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.
Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
Wommennes conseil broughte us first to wo
And made Adam fro Paradys to go. (ll. 3252–58)

Although the Priest would blame Pertelote for Chauntecleer's decision to 'walken in the yerd' (l. 3254), Pertelote actually makes no such recommendation. Yet the teller presses on to further blame the fall of humankind on women. Patrizia Grimaldi Pizzorno suggests that the Second Nun's Tale, which directly follows the Nun's Priest's Tale, 'attempts to neutralize the Priest's obscene etymological puns — so dishonourable for women and for nuns'.³³ According to this view, the Second Nun's Tale effectively provides some manner of remedy for the Priest's anti-feminism, just as the Priest's tale provides a comic remedy for the Monk's serious tragedies.

³³ Pizzorno, 'Chauntecleer's Bad Latin', p. 407.

Mirroring the many debates that occur among the pilgrims, the fowl dream debate continues as Chauntecleer's argument against Pertelote's medically based interpretation and dismissal of dreams gains momentum. He responds by citing literary authority and repeating the tales they tell: 'Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede' (l. 2984), he says, tells of two fellows who went on pilgrimage. When they are forced to sleep in separate lodgings, one man dreamt that his friend

gan upon hym calle,
And seyde, 'Allas, for in an oxes stalle
This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye!
Now help me, deere brother, or I dye.' (ll. 3003–06)

Despite waking from his sleep, the man ignored the dream as 'but a vanitee' (l. 3011). This scenario happened a second time. In a third dream, the friend reports his death, which the dreamer confirms upon waking.

It is tempting to suggest that by telling this story, Chauntecleer has used literary authority to prove that dreams should be feared, countering Pertelote's belief that dreams are 'but vanitee' (l. 2922) and that dreams deriving from bodily conditions hold no prophetic value. It is equally tempting to argue that dreams can predict the future, or that ignoring dreams leads to tragedy. However, no evidence suggests that Chauntecleer sees any of these interpretive possibilities in the *exemplum* itself, or in the dream it records. In fact, Chauntecleer seems to miss the point of his own *exemplum* when he says, 'Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun' (Murder will be found out, this is my conclusion) (l. 3057). A few lines later, however, he seems to recover his interpretive bearings by declaring, 'Heere may men seen that dremes been to drede' (l. 3063). Yet by featuring a main character who is unable to synthesize a single — let alone correct — interpretation, the Nun's Priest's Tale again places the interpretive burden on the audience and simultaneously precludes definitive conclusions. In doing so, the tale attempts to guard against, or figuratively 'remedy,' misinterpretation — or perhaps any interpretation at all.

To draw a comparison, the *Book of the Duchess* disrupts the hermeneutic process by preventing the synthesis of a single valid interpretation, whereas the Nun's Priest's Tale disrupts the process by tempting the reader with a superabundance of possible, though not necessarily valid, interpretations. What emerges is a confrontation of our own 'need to abstract meaning from particulars, a need that the Priest makes brilliant mockery of'.³⁴ Or, according to Piero

³⁴ Jensen, "Winklers" and "Janglers", p. 189.

Boitani, Chaucer ‘justifies the letter by itself, and *forces* us to *stay* within it’.³⁵ In other words, the tale plays with our attempts to read and interpret at every level: literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical.

This play continues with Chauntecleer’s second dream *exemplum*, which tells of two men who wish to cross the sea. One man experiences a *visio* in which ‘Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes side’ (l. 3079). Already the equivocation begins, as Chauntecleer does not say a man stood, but rather the dreamer thought a man stood. This man tells the dreamer that if he boards the ship the next day, he will die. Upon hearing this, the dreamer’s friend laughs and says, ‘I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges’ (l. 3090). Departing without the dreamer, the friend dies in a mishap at sea. After telling this second story, Chauntecleer reaches a conclusion more swiftly than he did with the first. He tells Pertelote directly that

no man sholde been to recchelees *careless*
Of dremes; for I seye thee, doutelees,
That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede. (ll. 3107–09)

Yet Chauntecleer fails to apply this insight to his own dream. In a similar way, the debate between Chauntecleer and Pertelote does not concern the correct interpretation of Chauntecleer’s dream but whether dreams should be feared. Edward Wheatley claims that the chickens debate ‘not what the dream means, but whether it can mean anything at all’.³⁶ Rather than approaching his dream practically, in order to understand and learn from it, Chauntecleer engages in an abstract, literary, philosophical exercise that will not profit him when he meets the fox. Chauntecleer is seduced by his argument as an intellectual exercise in itself, rather than actively applying the rationale of that argument to heed the warning contained in his dream.

Chauntecleer’s third dream *exemplum* concerns the child-king, St Kenelm, who ‘A lite er he was mordred, on a day, | His mordre in his avysioun he say’ (‘One day a little before he was murdered, | He saw his murder in a vision’) (ll. 3113–14). Like the previous two examples, this dream concerns death and is proven true and prophetic. Chauntecleer proceeds to cite Macrobius and the Bible, mentioning Joseph, the skilled dream interpreter, as well as dreamers Daniel and the Pharaoh of Egypt. Ancient dreamers Croesus and Hector’s wife Andromache follow. As all these figures and their dreams are recorded in written works, Chauntecleer’s argument continues to rely on literary authority.

³⁵ Boitani, “‘My Tale is of a Cock’ or, The Problems of Literal Interpretation”, p. 41.

³⁶ Wheatley, ‘Commentary Displacing Text’, p. 129.

In addition, all of the figures Chauntecleer cites are men, with the exception of the last, Andromache, who is identified in relation to her husband Hector. One might suggest that Chauntecleer has made the debate a man's game. Pertelote presents the views of medicine and science on the matter of dreams and the (courtly) view of women on the matter of men, while Chauntecleer presents the literature of male authors concerning male characters, and almost entirely the oneiric endeavours of men. In effect, the *exempla* construct a space that all but excludes women, a space not unlike that of the medieval church. Yet in the *sic et non* fashion typical of this tale, the Priest's mention of Andromache may save Chauntecleer and himself from possible anti-feminist accusations.

After citing his impressive congregation of literary authorities that testify to the prophetic power of dreams, Chauntecleer offers one final 'conclusioun, | That I shal han of this avisioun | Adversitee' (ll. 3151–53). While Chauntecleer almost connects the interpretive dots here, he disregards his insight too soon, as well as the dream and the debate: 'Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this' (l. 3157), he says to Pertelote. At this point, we may begin to realize that interpretation is a thoroughly vexed pursuit for Chauntecleer, who, upon waking, yields the interpretation of his own dream, instead asking God, Pertelote, and/or the audience to provide a correct interpretation. He again fails to interpret the dream after referencing literary *exempla* and authorities, all of which clearly state the value of dreams to foretell death. We might observe that Chauntecleer invites trouble precisely because he is either unable or unwilling to extract meaning from his dream and then apply that meaning to his life. 'Ultimately', Wheatley suggests, 'the cock's inability to effect a structural synthesis among the exempla here is less important than his inability to synthesize the dream-text and his future, but the problem is the same in both instances.'³⁷ Texts and dreams, the tale insists, are worthless until they are interpreted. It is through the process of interpretation that fruit is separated from chaff, meaning is distilled from fruit, and action made manifest from meaning. The Nun's Priest's Tale further suggests that the failure to interpret can be as potentially harmful as misinterpreting, for the dreamer, the audience, and possibly the author. Karen Surman Paley adds a different perspective, arguing that the Nun's Priest's Tale questions the efficacy of interpreting dreams at all, given the fact that Chauntecleer ignores his dream and still escapes harm.³⁸ Ultimately, it may well be that we see our own hermeneutic reflection gazing at us from the pages of the dream-poem in place of any definitive truth.

³⁷ Wheatley, 'Commentary Displacing Text', p. 133.

³⁸ Paley, "Al the Revers Seyn of This Sentence".

Chauntecleer, apparently unconcerned with his fate for the moment, is focused only on the beauty of Pertelote's face and her soft side, which inspire him to 'diffye bothe sweven and drem' (l. 3171). Gazing at the scarlet surrounding her eyes, he quips, '*In principio, | Mulier est hominis confusio —*' (*In the beginning, | Woman is man's ruin —*) (ll. 3163–64) followed by his famous English mistranslation, 'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis' (l. 3166). On a ground level we might interpret Chauntecleer's remark as an honest mistake or possibly an attempt to woo his favorite wife. Thomas suggests that 'the intellectual splendor of Chauntecleer's debate serves to seduce Pertelote and, perhaps, the cock himself'.³⁹ Yet this possibility may be so only if 'intellectual splendor' includes mistranslations, dismissals, and the failure to extract any trace of coherent meaning from one's own words. Alternatively, we might surmise that Chauntecleer wishes to insult Pertelote with his Latin or to blame her for not providing an adequate interpretation of his dream.

Paralleling this last possibility, the Priest himself voices anti-feminist sentiment without claiming responsibility for it as his own opinion. He says,

If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
 Passe over, for I seyde it in my game. *Let it be*
 Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere. (3261–63)

The Priest attempts to absolve his own anti-feminist comments with the claim that they are only a joke, directing our attention away from him and toward authors who write about such topics. While the Priest uses sly verbal dexterity and textual authority to slip from blame, Chauntecleer may actually capitalize on the imprecision inherent in any translation to justify anti-feminist remarks. Pizzorno contends that 'the "gentil" cock knows his Latin very well and that his so-called "mistranslation" is the correct translation of the parodic *etymologia composita* of the word *confusio*'. She thus judges Chauntecleer's misuse of language more severe than if the mistake had been innocent.⁴⁰ In any case, it is clear that Chauntecleer's 'bad Latin' serves, like Pertelote's earlier remarks, to simultaneously worsen and remedy the ills of anti-feminist sentiment, depending on the operative hermeneutic perspective. Finally, Peter W. Travis reads the mistranslation 'as a parody of the problematics of translation itself'.⁴¹

It can be argued that Chauntecleer's misuse of language leads directly to his 'fall' — 'And with that word he fley down from the beam' (l. 3172) — fol-

³⁹ Thomas, "'Have ye no mannes herte?'" p. 191.

⁴⁰ Pizzorno, 'Chauntecleer's Bad Latin', p. 400.

⁴¹ Travis, *Disseminal Chaucer*, p. 19.

lowing which he engages in excessive copulation. As we have already seen, it is also Chauntecleer's inability to effectively apply interpretive insights about his dream that influences his fall.⁴² Accordingly, the poem implies that the mistreatment of language and dreams, as much as pride, precedes a fall. From one perspective, then, the Priest's story can be read as a comic rendition of the Fall contextualized by a dream, fallen language, and fallen sexuality, circumstances that recall key aspects of the *Parliament of Fowls* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. Alone among these texts and their fallible characters, Chauntecleer eventually reverses his fall. By taking clear and decisive action in the form of speech, he is able to fly up into the tree, escaping certain death.

Action and speech are both key to Chauntecleer's survival. As Morton W. Bloomfield notes, the emphasis on action 'is proper to a story which wishes to make the power of the individual to defeat bad fortune one of its major themes'.⁴³ In this respect, Chauntecleer provides an alternative behavioural model for the passive, reticent Troilus, one that may remedy his tragic fate, as Lynn Staley Johnson suggests.⁴⁴ Further, while Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde* reveals the harmful potential of persuasive speech, Chauntecleer in the Nun's Priest's Tale reveals its life-saving potential. Indeed, the rhetorically rich tale is centrally concerned with the proper use of language in both verbal and written forms. These are central concerns for Chaucer as medieval poet. Marjorie Curry Woods has described Chaucer as 'rhetorically adroit to a degree and with an originality almost beyond our ability to appreciate',⁴⁵ while Martin Camargo notes how Chaucer engaged in 'persistent and sophisticated reflection on his own position as rhetor'.⁴⁶ Regarding the Nun's Priest's Tale specifically, Travis observes that 'apothegm, *sententia*, exemplum, and proverb tussle with fable, history, allegory and riddle for the admonitory centre of the literary stage',⁴⁷ and that 'the tale represents a curricular process of *narration* and *enarratio*, narration and interpretation, that encompasses the tale in its entirety'.⁴⁸ Rhetorical prescript may also explain the fact that Chauntecleer's characteristics conform

⁴² Flavin, 'The Similar Dramatic Function of Prophetic Dreams', reads Chauntecleer's dream as 'instrumental' in positioning him 'for the fall to take place' (p. 132).

⁴³ Bloomfield, 'The Wisdom of the Nun's Priest's Tale', p. 77.

⁴⁴ Johnson, "'To Make in Som Comedye'".

⁴⁵ Woods, 'In a Nutshell', p. 30.

⁴⁶ Camargo, 'Rhetorical Ethos and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', p. 173.

⁴⁷ Travis, '*The Nun's Priest's Tale* as Grammar-School Primer', p. 87.

⁴⁸ Wheatley, 'Commentary Displacing Text', p. 121.

so thoroughly to the understanding of medieval science. 'If Chaucer's *argumentum a natura*', John M. Steadman notes, 'were to have any valid basis, it must be founded on an orthodox conception of the *natura galli*, the nature of the barnyard cock.'⁴⁹ Simply by following rhetorical and generic rules, then, Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale renders itself utterly ridiculous. Yet in its accuracy, creativity, and breadth, the rhetoric of the Nun's Priest's Tale simultaneously testifies to Chaucer's real genius and demonstrates his 'gradual release from the astonishingly artificial and sophisticated art with which he began and the gradual replacement of formal rhetorical devices by methods of composition based upon close observation of life and the exercise of the creative imagination'.⁵⁰

Beneath the tale's showy achievements of rhetorical skill lies its deeper struggle with what Britton J. Harwood terms 'the dangerous nature of signs'.⁵¹ Such signs include images as well as words — dreams and tales — while the danger ranges from misinterpretation and persuasive speech to a failure to interpret or believe interpretations and even possible death.⁵² This fundamental realization of the sign as a potential agent of harm is also evident in the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale, in the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. Careful juxtaposition of dreams, medicine, and literary endeavour in the Nun's Priest's Tale further reflects an exploration of the dangerous or diseased sign. Just as Holcot's *Super sapientiam Salomonis* warns of the hazardous nature of dream divination, many of Chaucer's poems warn of the equally hazardous nature of signs themselves, the very stuff of dreams and literature.

Meeting the Fox

Up to this point, the tale has incorporated two of the three sources of what Holcot terms significant dreams. Pertelote represents the position that dreams originate in the body, and Chauntecleer represents the position that dreams often predict the future. As the debate between cock and hen concludes and the second part of the poem begins, the tale turns to Holcot's third source of significant dreams: heavenly bodies. Still, the tale remains arguably less concerned with oneiric sources and more concerned with interpretive processes. Pertelote interprets the dream as mere vanity because it originates in the body,

⁴⁹ Steadman, 'Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History', p. 244.

⁵⁰ Manly, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, p. 97.

⁵¹ Harwood, 'Signs and/as Origin', p. 189.

⁵² Harwood's essay depends more heavily on Derridean theory to illustrate the point.

while Chauntecleer would interpret the dream as prophetic and meaningful. Maintaining its hermeneutic focus, the tale continues to lean heavily on its audience to interpret the events it narrates. The events in the second half of the poem concern the scenario predicted by Chauntecleer's dream.

Through astrological information and a ridiculously elaborate *chronographia*, we learn that Chauntecleer's meeting with the fox occurs on May third. As this date is associated with the invention of the cross in the Church calendar, Palamon's release from prison in the Knight's Tale, and Pandarus's wooing of Criseyde for Troilus,⁵³ we are again confronted with an ambiguous — and therefore potentially dangerous — sign. Is this a day of auspicious or ominous events? To discover the answer to this and related questions, we must interpret both dream and poem using the astrological information provided. Let us examine more closely how this occurs.

On the third morning of May, Chauntecleer walks in the yard with his seven wives. This circumstance brings to mind Chauntecleer's dream, in which he 'romed up and down | Withinne our yeerd' (ll. 2898–99) and, as a result, we anticipate the fox's arrival. That this anticipation is not immediately gratified serves to emphasize the astrological information that appears instead of the fox. Specifically, we are told that Chauntecleer

Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore,
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryme, and crew with blissful stevene. *voice* (ll. 3193–97)

This passage serves at least two purposes. First, we learn that Chauntecleer's identity conforms to ancient and medieval scientific knowledge according to which roosters maintained an 'instinctive knowledge of astronomy'.⁵⁴ Medieval scientists, including St Albertus, Vincent of Beauvais, and Alexander Neckam, also believed that the cock's song 'was prompted by the regular movements of certain humors'.⁵⁵ By granting Chauntecleer traits that follow medieval scientific and medical understanding, Chaucer does not allow us to completely dismiss Pertelote's scientifically based dismissal of her husband's dream. Echoing the

⁵³ This is addressed in Adams and Levy, 'Good and Bad Fridays and May 3 in Chaucer'. In addition, Peters, 'Chaucer's Time in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', how the astrological date links the Nun's Priest's Tale to the tales of other pilgrims and the main frame.

⁵⁴ Steadman, 'Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History', p. 242.

⁵⁵ Steadman, 'Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History', p. 242.

dream debate itself, this portion of the tale humorously highlights the differences between a scientific inquiry into truth and a literary one, presenting and denying both at once and thereby continuing to frustrate the hermeneutic process.

Second, this passage re-introduces the topic of medicine generally and astrological medicine specifically. As discussed in reference to the *House of Fame*, astrology and medicine were closely associated disciplines during the medieval period. As Mirko D. Grmek explains, 'Astrological diagnosis developed as a practical consequence of the idea that events in the human body corresponded to the locations of the celestial bodies.'⁵⁶ With the reference to May third, the tale introduces the practices of astrology and medicine into the already complex realm of dream interpretation. This triangulation results in a particular type of divination:

Arnoldus explains that questions concerning specific dreams are to be referred for interpretation to the twelve Houses in the figure of a horoscope, and that prognostications of future events may be made by attributing dreams of a certain character to specified and respective parts of the body.⁵⁷

Dreams during the Middle Ages were interpreted using astrology and medicine, just as medical diagnoses were reached using astrology and dreams. Physician-astrologers 'used astrology as a means of prognosis which called for an involved calculation of the various planets' position at the time of the patient's birth and at the commencement of his illness'.⁵⁸ By presenting astrological information in the context of dreams and medicine, the Nun's Priest's Tale invites, or even forces us to employ, the very approach in our own reading of the tale. We must use the astrological information presented by the poem in order to accurately interpret the words and events it conveys, both of which concern Chauntecleer's dream.

That is, if we know that 'May 3 is one of the "Egyptian days", or *dies mali*, on which it is dangerous to undertake anything. The day was the unlucky Friday, Venus's day, and the sun was in Taurus, the "house" of Venus',⁵⁹ then we may foresee that Chauntecleer is in danger for any number of reasons. Recalling Chauntecleer's dream, we might predict that his meeting with the fox is likely to occur on this unlucky day. Further, Chaucer knew that medical astrology associates the house of Taurus with the neck region of the body, judging from a

⁵⁶ Grmek, 'The Concept of Disease', p. 256.

⁵⁷ Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences*, p. 212.

⁵⁸ Cartwright, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ See Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Sisam, p. xxix.



Figure 2. 'Zodiac Man', showing the body region associated with each zodiac sign, Cambridge, St John's College Library, MS K.26 fol. 41^v. Fourteenth century. Reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge.

section in *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* concerning the signs of the zodiac: ‘ever-ich of these 12 signes hath respect to a certeyn parcel of the body of a man, and hath it in governaunce; as Aries hath thin heved, and Taurus thy nekke and thy throte’ (I.21.70–74).⁶⁰ Based on such associations, which would have been well known to Chaucer’s contemporary audience as well, we may predict that the fox will seize the rooster by the neck. These events are indeed confirmed by the tale, which in turn proves Chauntecleer’s dream prophetic.

Were Chauntecleer to logically leverage his astrological knowledge in this manner, the resulting insight would create the opportunity for him to take action, altering the subsequent course of events and thereby avoiding harm. Yet just as he was unable to extract relevant meaning from his dream and his *exempla*, he fails to use his astrological knowledge to foresee and therefore attempt to prevent his own death. Clearly, Chauntecleer must learn more than how to resist flattery, or when to keep his eyes open; he must learn nothing less than how to ‘see’ properly, using processes of translation and interpretation to extract meaning from a range of figurative signs or ‘texts’ including dreams, literature, astrology, and life events. Failing to see anything in his dream, in the stories he tells, or in the stars, Chauntecleer finally sees only what he experiences. In an odd turnabout, then, the tale shows that the practical value of individual experience is equal to or greater than that of authoritative knowledge systems, including natural science, medicine, rhetoric, fiction, philosophy, and history. Equal, that is, in its inability to yield useful knowledge or understanding. We, as audience members, can learn Chauntecleer’s lessons with him. According to Charles Muscatine, reading the tale induces ‘an enlightened recognition of the problem of perception itself, the virtue of seeing’.⁶¹

Moreover, the tale suggests that prophecy and imagination also belong within the domain of proper sight, as is suggested by the following lines:

A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee,
That in the grove hadde woned yeres three, *had dwelt*
By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,
The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast. *broke through the hedges* (ll. 3215–18)

Hamm contends that the line refers to a tradition ‘running from Plato’s *Timaeus* through the Neo-Platonists, St. Augustine, Moses Maimonides, and others,

⁶⁰ For more on this subject see Henning, ‘Chauntecleer and Taurus’, and Braswell, ‘The Moon and Medicine in Chaucer’s Time’.

⁶¹ Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, p. 242.

associating the imagination with prophetic vision through dreams'.⁶² According to this tradition, imagination was understood to store within the mind images received through exterior senses. Norman Davis offers a third possible interpretation of 'heigh ymaginacioun,' namely, based on the fact that 'forncast' can connote premeditation, he proposes that the phrase refers to the fox's planned attack.⁶³ As Robert Pratt concludes,

The possible double significance of 'By heigh ymaginacioun forncast' (3217), presented at the first appearance of daun Russell, emphasizes and universalizes the opposition of cock and fox at this crucial moment when their paths are about to cross — the wicked antagonist having contrived his subtle plot, the foolish protagonist having been warned by God.⁶⁴

Further, 'heigh ymaginacioun' is a direct translation of 'alta fantasia', a phrase that appears twice in the *Commedia*, Dante's dream-poem, signifying the prophetic view of the imagination.⁶⁵ Supporting all of these possible meanings without favoring one over the others, the text associates divine prophecy with imagination, dreams, and literature. We may conclude that to engage in imaginative enterprise through dreams and literature is not only to see properly but to foresee; as the high-profile academic physician Arnau de Vilanova (c. 1240–1311) claims: 'The astrologer, the physician, and the lawyer can reveal prophetic knowledge by exercising their professions.'⁶⁶ With the Nun's Priest's Tale, Chaucer adds the poet to this list.

Returning to the Boethian brambles of the complex historical debate concerning God's foreknowledge versus individual free will, the Priest laments, 'O Chauntecleer' (l. 3230):

Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee;
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee, *foresees must necessarily be*
After the opinioun of certain clerkis. (ll. 3232–35)

Continuing, he says,

⁶² Hamm, 'Chaucer: "Heigh Ymaginacioun"', p. 395.

⁶³ Cited in Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', p. 567.

⁶⁴ Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', p. 568.

⁶⁵ Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', p. 565. Pratt notes that Dante uses the phrase in *Purgatorio* xvii. 25 and *Paradiso* xxxiii. 142. He also provides further detailed information on the phrase as it related to Chaucer here.

⁶⁶ Ziegler, *Medicine and Religion*, p. 53.

But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren	<i>sift it to the husks</i>
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,	
Or Boece, or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,	
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng	<i>respectable foreknowledge</i>
Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thing —	<i>Constrains</i>
‘Nedely’ clepe I symple necessitee —	<i>By ‘necessarily’ I mean of</i>
Or ells, if free choys be graunted me. (ll. 3240–46)	

F. Anne Payne carefully traces the references to Augustine, Boethius, and Bradwardine and their three theories of foreknowledge,⁶⁷ while Onno Oerlemans suggests that the dream debate between Pertelote and Chauntecleer ‘pits a philosophy of free will against the determination of “natural” science’ and that ‘narrative itself is the final locus of this opposition of free will and determinism’.⁶⁸ The Priest, Chauntecleer, and the audience must all wrestle with this fundamental opposition. The Priest, though, is constrained by ‘the explicit demands of the Host, the implicit demands of the audience in general, and his role as one who gives instructive sermons’.⁶⁹ Although Chauntecleer is not aware of it, his life depends on how he responds to the debate between free will and divine foreknowledge as it plays out in his own experience. Finally, the audience may ponder the extent to which the tale is (pre)determined or influenced by their own will to interpret. Each of these cases features the debate between individual free will and authorial foreknowledge, as much as the difficulty of relating to figures and sources of authority.

By juxtaposing the interpretation of both dream and literature, then, the Nun’s Priest’s Tale forces its readers to face questions of central concern to medieval thought. As Steven F. Kruger notes, a thirteenth-century Middle English dream-book in verse opens with typical claims of authenticity but ends by questioning its own validity: ‘Should we leave our dreams to God or actively search out their meanings? Should we distrust dreams or believe in their significance?’⁷⁰

As readers we may ask, should we distrust or believe in literary authority? This question seems to saturate every aspect of the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, from dreams and medicine to interpretation, courtly love, anti-feminism, rhetoric, foreknowledge, and free will. In addition to frequent citations of well-known

⁶⁷ Payne, ‘Foreknowledge and Free Will’.

⁶⁸ Oerlemans, ‘The Seriousness of the “Nun’s Priest’s Tale”’, p. 322.

⁶⁹ Oerlemans, ‘The Seriousness of the “Nun’s Priest’s Tale”’, p. 322.

⁷⁰ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 16.

authors, we are often urged to read certain texts and authorities: 'Reed eek of Jospeh' (l. 3130); 'Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere' (l. 3263); 'Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye' (l. 3329). In the tale's final 'moral' — 'Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille' (l. 3443) — Larry Scanlon finds 'an attempt to appropriate Christian authority'.⁷¹

Pressing this observation, it becomes clear that the Priest's relationship to (male Christian) literary authority parallels Chauntecleer's relationship to his rooster-father. It is indeed no coincidence that the fox flatters Chauntecleer's father, rather than Chauntecleer himself: 'Save yow, I herde nevere man so singe | As dide youre fader in the morwenynge' (ll. 3301–02). To trick Chauntecleer into singing, the fox challenges him to 'countrefete' his father: 'Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee; | Lat se; konne ye youre fader countrefete?' (ll. 3320–21). Chauntecleer is not merely faced with the challenge of singing as well as his father, but he must imitate with the intent to deceive, as the word 'counterfeit' implies.⁷² In effect, the fox dares Chauntecleer to commit the same crime of which he himself is guilty; that is, deception. As tale-teller, Chauntecleer is aligned with the Priest, as well as the poet.⁷³ Extending these patterns of association, the tale seems to suggest that the successful poet must blindly imitate the literary authority of his forefathers. Yet it also shows that to do so is as dangerous, or potentially harmful, for the poet as for Chauntecleer. The tale provides various antidotes to this harm. First, its 'hyperliterariness'⁷⁴ parodies those such as the Monk who blindly parrot literary authority. Second, the tale advocates individual action and experience such that 'individual experience augments textual authority'.⁷⁵

Under the wide umbrella of textual or literary authority, rhetoric occupies a position of unique importance for the Middle Ages in general and Chaucer specifically. Here among the Canterbury pilgrims, the Priest's use of rhetoric is modest, particularly when compared to the Monk's slavish devotion to it.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Scanlon, 'The Authority of the Fable', p. 49.

⁷² See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *counterfeit*, v.

⁷³ Astell, 'The Peasants' Revolt: Cock-crow in Gower and Chaucer', discusses the identification of cock, preacher, and poet. Pizzorno, 'Chauntecleer's Bad Latin', argues the association between cock and priest (pp. 388–90).

⁷⁴ Fehrenbacher, 'A Yeerd Enclosed Al Aboute', p. 142.

⁷⁵ Hum, 'Knowledge, Belief, and Lack of Agency', p. 520.

⁷⁶ Manly, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, claims that rhetoric comprises 100 per cent of the Monk's Tale, while just 50 per cent of the Nun's Priest's Tale (p. 107).

In fact, the Priest requites the monk in part with his comparatively moderate use of rhetoric. In a similar manner, Chaucer reveals himself ‘not merely as a disciple and imitator of a thoroughly artificial school of writing, but as a conscious exploiter of the formal rhetoric taught by the professional rhetoricians.’⁷⁷ In fact, the body of Chaucer’s poetry suggests that he became increasingly wary of rhetorical imitation and increasingly reliant on his own creative imagination. To an extent, this perspective is discernible in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale. In one sense, then, the tale warns against blind submission to authority, literary or otherwise.

Equally, the tale warns against blind rebellion against authority. This point is accomplished adroitly with the figure of Jack Straw, which stands out as a rare reference to contemporary events:

So hydous was the noyse — a, benedicitee! — *God bless!*
 Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee *retinue*
 Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille
 Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox. (ll. 3393–97)

Although Richard W. Fehrenbacher has observed that ‘the specter of Jack Straw and his meynee muscling their way into the text demonstrates [...] how history, attempt to contain it as one might, cannot be entirely banished from literature,’⁷⁸ history and rebellion are in fact purposefully subordinated to literature with the reference. Chaucer uses the historical figure of Jack Straw as a literary device to convey a level of noise rather than to invoke any substantive principle associated with Straw himself, or even with the Peasant’s Revolt. As a result, the Priest’s tale suggests that danger and tragedy can come from blindly following historical as well as literary precedent, thereby counterbalancing the Monk.

Of course, we cannot ignore the presence of history or rebellion so abruptly introduced into the tale with the mention of Jack Straw. Importantly, the allusion provides a contextual reference point within the tale to situate Chauntecleer’s rebellion against his own circumstances and fate, while allowing the tale and tale-teller to avoid overt rebellion against literary sources, or philosophical doctrines concerning predestination and free will. In this manner, the Nun’s Priest’s Tale seems to suggest that a position between submission to and rebellion against authority yields life rather than death. In writing the tale, Chaucer follows his own advice for the most part, staying close to the literary sources that inform the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, including Holcot and the French

⁷⁷ Manly, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, p. 112.

⁷⁸ Fehrenbacher, ‘A Yeerd Enclosed Al Aboute’, p. 135.

Roman de Renart. Chaucer's version is embellished with his own style, humour, and genius, and while he did not openly rebel against his literary forefathers, he does assert his own voice and even his own individual (literary) authority, just as the tale features a rooster who uses his voice and individual experience to alter his predestined and foreseen fate.

By taking decisive action in the form of speech, Chauntecleer rescues himself from repeating the history of Croesus, Alcione, and Troilus. Neither dream nor its interpretation, neither medicine nor literary and philosophical debates can succeed in preventing Chauntecleer from encountering the fox. Yet he escapes by taking decisive action in the form of speech: 'This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak, | In al his drede unto the fox he spak' (3405–06). Chauntecleer urges the fox to turn and address the noisy farm crowd, including the widow and her daughters, ducks, geese, dogs, and bees:

Sire, if that I were as ye,
 Yet sholde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
 'Turneth again, ye proude cherles alle! *churls*
 A verray pestilence upon yow falle!
 Now I am come unto the wodes side;
 Maugree youre heed, the cok shal here abyde. *In spite of all you can do*
 I wol hym ete, in faith, and that anon!' (ll. 3407–13)

When the fox opens his mouth, Chauntecleer escapes his jaws, flying to safety high in a tree. Chauntecleer's spoken appeal again shows the double potential of language to wound and heal. While Chauntecleer's words save his life, they also instruct the fox to curse the crowd with disease. Chauntecleer's dream and attempts to interpret it fail to provide practical assistance for Chauntecleer's battle with the fox. Rather, it is speech and individual action — or free will — that save his life. Speech, then, plays a curative role in the tale by preventing Chauntecleer's prophesied death despite its potential to harm or, in the case of the fox, to perpetuate hunger.

In the end, does this fable have a moral? This is no simple question. Both Chauntecleer and the fox, it would seem, have lessons to learn concerning trust, trickery, flattery, and pride. Further, the fox must learn when to speak and when to keep silent while Chauntecleer must learn 'whan he sholde see' (l. 3431) — or, with regard to his dream, when and how to practically apply interpretive insights. According to Saul Nathaniel Brody, Chauntecleer 'warns against being blind, presumably to flattery, but it is only by using flattery that he manages to escape from the fox'.⁷⁹ Although the tale assigns the lesson of proper

⁷⁹ Brody, 'Truth and Fiction in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', p. 42. For more on the topic of flat-

speech to the fox, Chauntecleer may need to learn it as well. In turn, all of these lessons apply to us as readers and such apparently simple tasks as attempting to distil a moral from the fable. The tale thus 'demonstrates how the linguistic essence of a piece of literature short-circuits all attempts to arrive at a stable and nonconflicting set of interpretative meanings'.⁸⁰

Chauntecleer, then, is not alone in being subject to the effects of language. The Nun's Priest's Tale shows that Pertelote, fox, Priest, pilgrims, readers, and tales themselves are subject to similar effects. Like Chauntecleer, for example, each of the Canterbury pilgrims must experience directly the full range of positive and negative effects attending their own active use of language. Speech is in fact among the pilgrims's most immediate experiences. As for the reader, V. A. Kolve argues that the tale 'seeks to alter our habitual gestures of self-regard and self-aggrandizement, and in its capacity to achieve that effect lies its greatest potential for the moral transformation of its audience'.⁸¹ On another level, the Priest's comic tale remedies the malignancy and banality of bad fate that accompanies the Monk's tragic tales. In this way the Nun's Priest's Tale figures comedy as an antidote to tragedy and individual action as an antidote to predestination.

Overall, the tale expresses an understanding of dreams and medicine that is quite different from that expressed in the other works included in this study. In the *Book of the Duchess*, dreams maintain a curative power for narrator and characters, particularly when the dream appears in written form. Both the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls* present dreams and literary endeavour as potentially curative and/or pathogenic. While *Troilus and Criseyde* includes a broad range of perspectives regarding dreams and medicine, it is Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's boar dream that finally cures his lovesickness and attendant ailments. In each of these works, dreams and dream interpretation are invested with at least some curative potential. In the Nun's Priest's Tale, however, neither dreams nor their interpretation yield any sort of remedy. Here, medicine and dreams join a legion of other epistemological systems including rhetoric, philosophy, history, astrology, natural science, and exegesis that do not themselves necessarily serve life or meaning. Instead, individual action and speech function in the tale as powerful curative forces.

tery in relation to Chauntecleer's fall, see Houwen, 'Flattery and the Mermaid in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*'.

⁸⁰ Travis, *Disseminial Chaucer*, p. 144.

⁸¹ Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, p. 78.

AFTERWORD

A series of dream-poems may benefit the literary critic, A. C. Spearing suggests, just as a series of dreams may benefit the dream-analyst.¹ While it is less certain whether such a method grants ‘more confidence in our interpretations’,² this book has gleaned some measure of insight by studying six of Chaucer’s poems as a chronological series including the dream-poems and extending to *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Nun’s Priest’s Tale. This approach reveals new understanding of how the poetic role and representation of dreams shifts with each individual text beginning on the level of genre. In the dream visions, genre and dream seem equally weighted in the compositional schema. In *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Nun’s Priest’s Tale, however, genre and dream are separate and subordinate to larger compositional schema. Charles Elliott observes that in contrast to the dream visions, the Nun’s Priest’s Tale contains ‘no curtain of sleep’ to divide the worlds of imagination, dreams, and books from what may be termed ‘reality’.³

Similarly, the representation and poetic role of medicine shifts with each of the six texts included in this book. While a humoural understanding of medicine appears in several of the dream visions, *Troilus and Criseyde* begins to explore a new, exogenous model of infection; and while the diagnostic potential of dreams appears to operate in the *Book of the Duchess*, this potential is satirized in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale. Moreover, the impact of genre on the textual representation of medicine and medical themes is arguably more acute in the case of the dream-poem. In the case of the *Book of the Duchess*, I argue that the dream-poem becomes associated with the attempt to diagnose and cure, just as

¹ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 48.

² Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 16; cited in Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 48.

³ Elliott, ‘Chaucer’s Reading’.

the narrator's dream works to diagnose and cure the Black Knight. This conflation of dream and literary practice becomes more pronounced in the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls*, both of which explore the dual potential of language and dreams to heal and to harm. Ultimately, the *House of Fame* focuses more on the potentially harmful forces associated with literary practice, including misinterpretation and defamation, while the *Parliament of Fowls* focuses more on the curative forces, including the recreative potential of literary endeavour and an implied parallel between the professions of poet and physician. In each of these three poems, the dream-vision genre generates strong associations between the dream and the written work — between the visionary experience and the literary one.

With *Troilus and Criseyde*, medicine and medical metaphors come to the fore while dreams occupy a place of less prominence. Quitting the dream-vision form, if only temporarily, allows more nuanced associations to emerge between and among medicine, dreams, and literary endeavour as distinct yet intertwined entities. Various kinds and traces of literary endeavour are found throughout *Troilus and Criseyde*, including written letters, high flown rhetoric, public recitation of texts, and nuanced interpretative processes. Overall, the three threads of dreams, medicine, and language-related matters are interwoven throughout the poem in surprising and intriguing ways. These threads are stretched further in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* and the Nun's Priest's Tale to create pieces that are colourful and subversive each in their own distinctive manner. In many ways the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* again leverages the dream as a force for healing, working through irony and paradox to re-envision, reassemble, or otherwise remedy cultural, social, political, religious, and literary disunity and fragmentation.

Finally, representations of dreams, medicine, and literary texts contained within the Nun's Priest's Tale — the last poem of the study series and one of the last Chaucer wrote — are purposefully fragmented and subverted. In stark contrast to the initial identification and foregrounding of dream and genre established in the *Book of the Duchess*, the Nun's Priest's Tale moves through a dizzying procession of genres, including beast-fable, sermon, exemplum and mock-heroic, ultimately rendering the poem a collage-like amalgam that serves to problematize and complicate rather than to organize and direct the action and content.

Here at the end, the question remains: what, if any, are the implications of this study for twenty-first century culture? What can we learn, and how can we benefit from the Apollonian association between medicine and poetry, the Asclepian association between medicine and dreams, and the Hippocratic and Galenic diagnostic use of dreams that Chaucer brings into play? Throughout

the preceding pages, I have argued that dreams and literary practice have the potential to establish and maintain individual and social well-being. This assertion holds true not only for medieval culture but also our own. Regardless of time and place, dreams and language are potent media capable of facilitating, in the words of this study, health and harmony — and, equally, disease and discord. What is at stake, then, is nothing short of life and the quality of living. Another of the most basic implications of this study is that dreams and literary practice maintain significant power — and, further, that this power must be recognized if it is to be used wisely and effectively. Dreams and language function as messengers, mirrors, and agents of change for what is working or not working — for author, dreamer, audience, and culture. As such, both may be leveraged for the benefit of ourselves and the communities to which we belong.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61

Primary Sources

Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', in *Aeschylus 1*, ed. by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (New York: Modern Library, 1950), pp. 41–101

Alan of Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980)

Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, trans. by Paul Lachance (Mahwah: Paulist, 1993)

Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. by James George Frazer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921)

Aristotle, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams*, ed. and trans. by David Gallop (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1996)

—, *On the Soul*, trans. by W. S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1936)

Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, trans. by Robert J. White, 2nd edn (Torrance: Original Books, 1990)

Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. by John Hammond Taylor, SJ, 2 vols (New York: Newman, 1982)

Avicenna, *A Treatise on the Canon of Medicine*, trans. by O. Cameron Gruner (London: Luzac, 1930)

Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato*, trans. by R. K. Gordon, in *The Story of Troilus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 25–127

Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by V. E. Watts (New York: Penguin, 1969)

Capellanus, Andreas, *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. by John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963)

- Chaucer, Geoffrey, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. by Helen Phillips and Nick Havely (London: Longman, 1997)
- , *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, ed. and trans. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982)
- , *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Derek Pearsall, in *A Variorum Edition of The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Paul Ruggiers, 25 vols in 40 fascs (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), II. 9 (1984)
- , *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, ed. by Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960)
- , *The Parlement of Foulys*, ed. by Derek Brewer (London: Thomas Nelson, 1960)
- , *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987)
- Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. by Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)
- Christine de Pizan, *Christine's Vision*, trans. by Glenda K. McLeod, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 68 (New York: Garland, 1993)
- Claudianus, *De IV consulate honorii*, in *Works*, ed. and trans. by Maurice Platnauer, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam, 1922), I, 286–335
- Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 1985)
- Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*, in *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, trans. by Andrew M. Holowchak (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), pp. 166–67
- Hippocrates, *Hippocrates*, trans. by W. H. S. Jones and others, Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols (London: Heinemann, 1923–2012)
- , *Writings*, trans. by John Chadwick and William Mann (New York: Penguin, 1978)
- Hugh of St Victor, *The 'Didascalicon' of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. by Jerome Taylor, Records of Civilization Sources and Studies, 64 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961)
- Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911)
- , *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- , 'Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings. An English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary', ed. by William D. Sharpe, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 54. 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1964)
- Lorris, Guillaume de, and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)
- Machaut, Guillaume de, *The Fountain of Love (La Fonteinne Amoureuse) and Two Other Love Vision Poems*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 54 (New York: Garland, 1993)
- , *The Judgment of the King of Navarre*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 45 (New York: Garland, 1988)
- Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952)

- The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, trans. by Grant Showerman, Loeb Classical Library, 41 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914)
- , *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- Petrarca, Francesco, *Invectives*, ed. and trans. by David Marsh (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)
- Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. by Thomas L. Pangle (New York: Basic Books, 1980)
- Rolle, Richard, *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, ed. by Richard Harvey, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 106 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896)
- The Story of Troilus as Told by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Robert Henryson*, ed. by Robert Kay Gordon, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995)
- Tertullian, *De anima*, ed. by J. H. Waszink (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1947)
- Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. by Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Random House, 1983)
- , *Aeneid*, trans. by Sarah Ruden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

Secondary Studies

- Adams, George R., and Bernard S. Levy, 'Good and Bad Fridays and May 3 in Chaucer', *English Language Notes*, 3 (1966), 245–48
- Adler, Robert E., *Medical Firsts: From Hippocrates to the Human Genome* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2004)
- Aiken, Pauline, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Dame Pertelote's Knowledge of Medicine', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 281–87
- Alverny, Marie-Thérèse d', 'Translations and Translators', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 26 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 421–62
- Amundsen, Darrel W., *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
- Anderson, J. J., 'The Narrators in the *Book of the Duchess* and the *Parlement of Foules*', *Chaucer Review*, 26 (1992), 219–35
- Arthur, Ross G., 'Chaucer's Use of *The Dream of Scipio* in *The Parliament of Fowls*', *American Benedictine Review*, 38 (1987), 29–49
- Astell, Ann W., *Chaucer and the Universe of Learning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996)
- , 'The Peasants' Revolt: Cock-crow in Gower and Chaucer', in *Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Allen J. Frantzen, Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association, 10 (Chicago: Illinois Medieval Association, 1993), pp. 53–64

- Baker, Donald C., 'The Parliament of Fowls', in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 355–69
- Baswell, Christopher, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the 'Aeneid' from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Behr, Charles A., *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1968)
- Benedictow, Ole J., *The Black Death, 1346–1353: The Complete History* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004)
- Bennett, J. A. W., *Chaucer's 'Book of Fame': An Exposition of 'The House of Fame'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968)
- , *The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957)
- , 'Some Second Thoughts on *The Parliament of Foules*', in *Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives: Essays Presented to Paul E. Beichner*, ed. by Edward Vasta and Zacharias P. Thundy (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 132–46
- Benson, David C., 'The Astrological Medicine of Chaucer's Physician and Nicholas of Lynn's *Kalendarium*', *American Notes and Queries*, 22 (1984), 62–66
- Benson, Larry D., *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965)
- Bethurum, Dorothy, 'The Center of the *Parlement of Foules*', in *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry*, Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities, 2 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1954), pp. 39–50
- , 'Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 74 (1959), 511–20
- Bishop, Louise M., *Words, Stones, & Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007)
- Bloomfield, Morton W., 'The Wisdom of the Nun's Priest's Tale', in *Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives: Essays Presented to Paul E. Beichner*, ed. by Edward Vasta and Zacharias P. Thundy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), pp. 70–82
- Bodenham, C. H. L., 'The Nature of the Dream in Late Medieval French Literature', *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 74–86
- Boening, Robert, 'Chaucer's *House of Fame*, the Apocalypse, and Bede', *American Benedictine Review*, 36 (1985), 263–77
- , 'The Fragmentation of Visionary Iconography in Chaucer's *House of Fame* and the *Cloisters Apocalypse*', in *So Rich a Tapestry: The Sister Arts and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Kate Greenspan and Ann Hurley (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 181–99
- Boitani, Piero, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, Medium Ævum Monographs, 8 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1977)
- , '"My Tale is of a Cock" or, The Problems of Literal Interpretation', in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. by Richard G. Newhauser and John A. Alford (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1995), pp. 25–42

- , 'Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams: The *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament of Fowls*', in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 39–57
- Boyd, Heather, 'Chauntecleer and the Eagle', *English Studies in Africa*, 21 (1978), 65–69
- Braddy, Haldeen, 'New Documentary Evidence Concerning Chaucer's Mission to Lombardy', *Modern Language Notes*, 48 (1933), 507–11
- Braswell, Laurel, 'The Moon and Medicine in Chaucer's Time', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 8 (1986), 145–56
- Bredin, Hugh, 'Medieval Art Theory', in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. by Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 29–39
- Brewer, D. S., 'The Genre of the "Parlement of Foules"', *Modern Language Notes*, 53 (1958), 321–26
- Brody, Saul Nathaniel, 'Truth and Fiction in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 14 (1979), 33–47
- Brown, Peter, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)
- Brumble, David H., *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998)
- Buckler, Patricia P., 'Love and Death in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*', in *Joinings and Disjoinings: The Significance of Marital Status in Literature*, ed. by JoAnna Stephens Mink and Janet Doubler Ward (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991), pp. 6–18
- Burrow, John A., *Essays on Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)
- , 'The Third Eye of Prudence', in *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages*, ed. by John A. Burrow and Ian P. Wei (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000)
- Butterfield, Ardis, 'Lyric and Elegy in *The Book of the Duchess*', *Medium Ævum*, 60 (1991), 33–60
- , 'Pastoral and the Politics of Plague in Machaut and Chaucer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 16 (1994), 3–27
- Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987)
- Byrne, Joseph P., *The Black Death* (Westport: Greenwood, 2004)
- Cadden, Joan, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- , 'Trouble in the Earthly Paradise: The Regime of Nature in Late Medieval Christian Culture', in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. by Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 207–31
- Calin, William, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)
- , 'Machaut's Legacy: The Chaucerian Inheritance Reconsidered', in *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition*, ed. by R. Barton Palmer, Georgia State Literary Studies, 10 (New York: AMS, 1999), pp. 29–46
- Camargo, Martin, 'The Consolation of Pandarus', *Chaucer Review*, 25 (1991), 214–28

- , 'Rhetorical Ethos and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 33 (1996), 173–86
- Camille, Michael, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London: King, 1998)
- Campbell, Anna Montgomery, *The Black Death and Men of Learning*, History of Science Society Publications, 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931)
- Carton, Evan, 'Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus' Bed and Chaucer's Art', in *Critical Essays on Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Thomas C. Stillinger (London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 219–42
- Cartwright, Frederick F., *A Social History of Medicine* (London: Longman, 1977)
- Castiglioni, Arturo, *A History of Medicine*, trans. by E. B. Krumbhaar, 2nd edn (New York: Knopf, 1947)
- Chamberlain, David, 'The Music of the Spheres and *The Parlement of Foules*', *Chaucer Review*, 5 (1970), 32–56
- Cherniss, Michael D., *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry* (Norman: Pilgrim, 1987)
- , 'Chaucer's Last Dream Vision: The "Prologue" to the "Legend of Good Women"', *Chaucer Review*, 20 (1986), 183–99
- Collette, Carolyn P., ed., *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, Chaucer Studies, 36 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006)
- Cooper, Helen, *The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)
- Copeland, Rita, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Curry, Walter Clyde, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960)
- David, Alfred, *The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976)
- Davis, Steven, 'Guillaume De Machaut, Chaucer's "Book of the Duchess", and the Chaucer Tradition', *Chaucer Review*, 36 (2002), 391–405
- Dean, James, 'Artistic Conclusiveness in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*', *Chaucer Review*, 21 (1986), 16–25
- , 'Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*: A Non-Boethian Interpretation', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 46 (1985), 235–49
- , 'Spiritual Allegory and Chaucer's Narrative Style: Three Test Cases', *Chaucer Review*, 18 (1984), 273–87
- Delany, Sheila, *Chaucer's 'House of Fame': The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972)
- , *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)
- Desmond, Marilyn, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval 'Aeneid'*, Medieval Cultures, 8 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994)
- Dilorenzo, Raymond D., 'Wonder and Words: Paganism, Christianity, and Consolation in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 52 (1982), 20–39

- Dinshaw, Carolyn, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989)
- Dodds, Eric R., *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Sather Classical Lectures, 25 (Berkeley: University of California, 1965)
- Donaldson, E. Talbot, *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970)
- Donnelly, Colleen, 'Challenging the Conventions of Dream Vision in *The Book of the Duchess*', *Philological Quarterly*, 66 (1987), 421–35
- Dubs, Kathleen E., and Stoddard Malarkey, 'The Frame of Chaucer's *Parlement*', *Chaucer Review*, 13 (1978), 16–24
- Eatough, Geoffrey, *Fracastoro's Syphilis*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and Monographs, 12 (Liverpool: Cairns, 1984)
- Economou, George D., *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972)
- Edelstein, Emma J., and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, Publications of the Institute of the History of Medicine, 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945)
- Edwards, Robert R., *The Dream of Chaucer: Representations and Reflection in the Early Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989)
- , 'Ricardian Dreamwork: Chaucer, Cupid, and Loyal Lovers', in *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, ed. by Carolyn P. Collette, Chaucer Studies, 36 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 59–82
- Eitrem, Samson, 'Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual', in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. by Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 175–87
- Elbow, Peter, *Oppositions in Chaucer* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1975)
- Eleazar, Edwin, 'With Us Ther Was a Doctour of Phisik', in *Chaucer's Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin (Westport: Greenwood, 1996), pp. 220–42
- Elliott, Charles, 'Chaucer's Reading', in *Chaucer's Mind and Art*, ed. by Arthur C. Cawley, Essays Old and New, 3 (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1970), pp. 46–68
- Ellmann, Maud, 'Blanche', in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, ed. by Jeremy Hawthorn (Baltimore: Arnold, 1984), pp. 99–110
- Fehrenbacher, Richard W., 'A Yeerd Enclosed Al Aboute: Literature and History in the "Nun's Priest's Tale"', *Chaucer Review*, 29 (1994), 134–48
- Ferguson, George, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- Ferster, Judith, *Chaucer on Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- , 'Reading Nature: The Phenomenology of Reading in the *Parliament of Fowls*', *Medievalia*, 3 (1977), 189–213
- Finucane, Ronald C., *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995)
- Fischer, Steven R., 'Dreambooks and the Interpretation of Medieval Literary Dreams', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 65 (1983), 1–20

- Fish, Varda, 'The Origin and Original Object of "Troilus and Criseyde"', *Chaucer Review*, 18 (1984), 304–15
- Flavin, Louise, 'The Similar Dramatic Function of Prophetic Dreams: Eve's Dream Compared to Chauntecleer's', *Milton Quarterly*, 17 (1983), 132–38
- Fradenburg, Louise O., *Sacrifice your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer*, Medieval Cultures, 31 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002)
- , 'Spectacular Fictions: The Body Politic in Chaucer and Dunbar', *Poetics Today*, 5 (1984), 493–517
- Frank, Robert Worth, Jr, 'Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 71 (1956), 530–39
- French, Roger, 'The Anatomical Tradition', in *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, ed. by William F. Bynum and Roy Porter, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 81–101
- , 'Foretelling the Future: Arabic Astrology and English Medicine in the Late Twelfth Century', *Isis*, 87 (1996), 453–480
- , *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Friedman, John B., 'The Dreamer, the Whelp, and Consolation in "The Book of the Duchess"', *Chaucer Review*, 3 (1966), 145–62
- , '"He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence": The Iconography of the Plague in the Late Middle Ages', in *Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Francis Newman, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 39 (Binghamton: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1986), pp. 76–112
- Gallacher, Patrick J., 'Chaucer and the Rhetoric of the Body', *Chaucer Review*, 28 (1994), 216–36
- Galway, Margaret, 'Chaucer's Journeys in 1368', *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 (1958), 183
- Getz, Faye Marie, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)
- Gilles, Sealy, 'Love and Disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 25 (2003), 157–96
- Gottfried, Robert S., *Doctors and Medicine in Medieval England, 1340–1530* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)
- Greenfield, Stanley B., 'The Role of Calkas in *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Medium Ævum*, 36 (1967), 141–51
- Greenspan, Kate, and Ann Hurley, eds, *So Rich a Tapestry: The Sister Arts and Cultural Studies* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995)
- Gregory, Tullio, ed., *I Sogni nel Medioevo*, Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, 35 (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985)
- Grennen, Joseph E., 'Hert-Huntyng in the *Book of the Duchess*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 25 (1964), 131–39
- Grmek, Mirko D., 'The Concept of Disease', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek, trans. by Anthony Shugar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 241–58

- Grudin, Michaela Paasche, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1996)
- Hagedorn, Suzanne C., *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004)
- Hamilton, Mary, *Incubation: or, The Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches* (London: Henderson, 1906)
- Hamm, Victor M., 'Chaucer: "Heigh Ymaginacioun"', *Modern Language Notes*, 69 (1954), 394–95
- Hansen, Elaine Tuttle, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992)
- , 'The Feminization of Men in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*', in *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, ed. by Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), pp. 51–70
- Hardman, Phillipa, 'The "Book of the Duchess" as a Memorial Monument', *Chaucer Review*, 28 (1994), 205–15
- Harris, Jonathan Gil, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- Hart, Gerald D., *Asclepius, the God of Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Martin Forrest (London: Royal Society of Medicine, 2000)
- Harwood, Britton J., 'Signs and/as Origin: Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*', *Style*, 20 (1986), 189–202
- Haskins, Charles Homer, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science* (New York: Ungar, 1924)
- Hatty, Suzanne E., and James Hatty, *The Disordered Body: Epidemic Disease and Cultural Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999)
- Hazelton, Richard, 'Chaucer and Cato', *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 357–80
- Heffernan, Carol Falvo, 'Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*: The Disease of Love and Courtly Love', *Neophilologus*, 74 (1990), 294–309
- , 'That Dog Again: *Melancholia Canina* and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *Modern Philology*, 84 (1986), 185–90
- , *The Melancholy Muse: Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Early Medicine*, Duquesne Studies, 19 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1995)
- , 'Wells and Streams in Three Chaucerian Gardens', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 15 (1979), 339–56
- Henderson, John, 'The Black Death in Florence: Medical and Communal Responses', in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100–1600*, ed. by Steven Bassett (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 136–50
- Henning, Standish, 'Chauntecleer and Taurus', *English Language Notes*, 3 (1965), 1–4
- Herdeg, Walter, ed., *The Sun in Art: Sun Symbolism of Past and Present, in Pagan and Christian Art, Popular Art, Fine Art and Applied Art* (Zürich: Graphis, 1962)
- Hewitt, Kathleen, 'Loss and Restitution in the *Book of the Duchess*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 25 (1989), 19–35

- , “‘Ther it was First’: Dream Poetics in the “Parliament of Fowls”, *Chaucer Review*, 24 (1989), 20–28
- Hieatt, Constance B., ‘The Dreams of Troilus, Criseyde, and Chauntecleer: Chaucer’s Manipulation of the Categories of Macrobius et al’, *English Studies in Canada*, 14 (1988), 400–14
- Hill, John M., ‘The “Book of the Duchess,” Melancholy, and that Eight-Year Sickness’, *Chaucer Review*, 9 (1974), 35–50
- Hinton, Norman, ‘The Black Death and *The Book of the Duchess*’, in *His Firm Estate: Essays in Honor of Franklin James Eikenberry*, ed. by Donald E. Hayden, University of Tulsa Department of English Monograph Series, 2 (Tulsa: University of Tulsa Press, 1967), pp. 72–78
- Holowchak, M. Andrew, *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002)
- Houwen, L. A. J. R., ‘Flattery and the Mermaid in Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*’, in *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature*, ed. by L. A. J. R. Houwen, Mediaevalia Groningana, 20 (Groningen: Forsten, 1997), pp. 77–92
- Howard, Donald R., *Chaucer: His Life, his Works, his World* (New York: Dutton, 1987)
- Hughes, Muriel Joy, *Women Healers in Medieval Life and Literature* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1968)
- Hum, Sue, ‘Knowledge, Belief, and Lack of Agency: The Dreams of Geoffrey, Troilus, Criseyde, and Chauntecleer’, *Style*, 31 (1997), 500–22
- Huppé, Bernard F., ‘The Unlikely Narrator: The Narrative Strategy of the *Troilus*’, in *Signs and Symbols in Chaucer’s Poetry*, ed. by John P. Hermann and John J. Burke (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), pp. 179–94
- Huppé, Bernard F., and D. W. Robertson, *Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer’s Allegories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963)
- Husser, Jean-Marie, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, trans. by Jill M. Munro, Biblical Seminar, 63 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999)
- Jacquart, Danielle, ‘Medical Scholasticism’, in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek, trans. by Anthony Shugar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 197–240
- Jacquart, Danielle, and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- Jager, Eric, ‘Croesus and Chauntecleer: The Royal Road of Dreams’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 49 (1988), 3–18
- , ‘Reading the *Roman* Inside Out: The Dream of Croesus as a *Caveat Lector*’, *Medium Evum*, 57 (1988), 67–74
- Jameson, Frederic, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981)
- Jauss, Hans Robert, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti, Theory and History of Literature, 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982)
- Jayne, Walter Addison, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925)

- Jefferson, Bernard L., *Chaucer and the 'Consolation of Philosophy' of Boethius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917)
- Jensen, Emily, "Winklers" and "Janglers": Teller/Listener/Reader Response in the "Monk's Tale," the Link, and the "Nun's Priest's Tale", *Chaucer Review*, 32 (1997), 183–95
- Johnson, Lynn Staley, "To Make in Som Comedy": Chauntecleer, Son of Troy', *Chaucer Review*, 19 (1985), 201–44
- Jouanna, Jacques, 'The Birth of Western Medical Art', in *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mirko D. Grmek, trans. by Anthony Shugaar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 22–71
- Jung, C. G., *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: [n. pub.], 1933)
- Kelley, Michael R., 'Antithesis as the Principle of Design in the *Parlement of Foules*', *Chaucer Review*, 14 (1979), 61–73
- Kelly, Douglas, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978)
- Kemp, Simon, *Medieval Psychology*, Contributions in Psychology, 14 (New York: Greenwood, 1990)
- Kibre, Pearl, and Nancy G. Siraisi, 'The Institutional Setting: The Universities', in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David C. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 120–44
- King, Helen, *Greek and Roman Medicine* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2001)
- Kiser, Lisa, 'Sleep, Dreams, and Poetry in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 19 (1983), 3–12
- , *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the 'Legend of Good Women'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)
- Knapp, Peggy Ann, 'Boccaccio and Chaucer on Cassandra', *Philological Quarterly*, 56 (1977), 413–17
- Kolve, V. A., *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984)
- , *Telling Images: Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)
- Kragelund, Patrick, *Dream and Prediction in the 'Aeneid': A Semiotic Interpretation of the Dreams of Aeneas and Turnus* (København: Museum Tusculanum, 1976)
- Kruger, Steven F., *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- , 'Imagination and the Complex Movement of Chaucer's "House of Fame"', *Chaucer Review*, 28 (1993), 117–34
- , 'Medical and Moral Authority in the Late Medieval Dream', in *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, ed. by Peter Brown (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 51–83
- Lambert, Mark, 'Telling the Story in *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 59–73

- Leicester, Henry M. Jr, 'The Harmony of Chaucer's "Parlement:" A Dissonant Voice', *Chaucer Review*, 9 (1974), 15–34
- Lewis, C. S., *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936)
- , *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964)
- Leyerle, John, 'Chaucer's Windy Eagle', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 40 (1971), 247–65
- Lieshout, R. G. A. van, *Greeks on Dreams* (Utrecht: HES, 1980)
- Lindberg, David C., *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, 600 BC to AD 1450* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- , *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976)
- , 'The Transmission of Greek and Arabic Learning in the West', in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David C. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 52–90
- Lloyd, Geoffrey Ernest Richard, *In the Grip of Disease: Studies in the Greek Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Lomperis, Linda, and Sarah Stanbury, eds, *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)
- Loomis, Roger Sherman, 'Chaucer's Eight Years' Sickness', *Modern Language Notes*, 59 (1944), 178–80
- Lounsbury, Thomas R., *Studies in Chaucer: His Life and Writings*, 3 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892)
- Lowes, John Livingstone, 'The Loveres Maladye of Hereos', *Modern Philology*, 11 (1914), 491–546
- Lumiansky, R. M., 'Calchas in the Early Versions of the Troilus Story', *Tulane Studies in English*, 4 (1954), 5–20
- , 'Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*: A Philosophical Interpretation', *Review of English Studies*, 24 (1948), 81–89
- Lynch, Kathryn L., *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, *Chaucer Studies*, 27 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000)
- , *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988)
- Manly, John M., *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians* (London: British Academy, 1926)
- Manzalaoui, Mahmoud, 'Ars longa, vita brevis', *Essays in Criticism*, 12 (1962), 221–24
- Margherita, Gayle, 'Originary Fantasies and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 116–41
- Mattern, Susan P., *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)
- McAlpine, Monica E., 'Criseyde's Prudence', in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 25 (2003), 199–224

- , 'The Triumph of Fiction in the Nun's Priest's Tale', in *Art and Context in Late Medieval English Narrative: Essays in Honor of Robert Worth Frank, Jr.*, ed. by Robert R. Edwards (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 79–92
- McCall, John P., 'The Harmony of Chaucer's *Parliament*', *Chaucer Review*, 5 (1970), 22–31
- McDonald, Charles O., 'An Interpretation of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*', *Speculum*, 30 (1955), 444–57
- McDonald, William B., 'Christian Sun Symbols', in *The Sun in Art: Sun Symbolism of Past and Present, in Pagan and Christian Art, Popular Art, Fine Art and Applied Art*, ed. by Walter Herdeg (Zürich: Graphis, 1962), pp. 32–37
- McGrady, Deborah, 'What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works', in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. by Marilyn Desmond Medieval Cultures, 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 195–214
- McKeon, Richard, 'Poetry and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: The Renaissance of Rhetoric', *Modern Philology*, 43 (1946), 217–34
- McNeill, John T., and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents*, Records of Civilizations, 29 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938)
- Mehl, Dieter, 'Chaucer's Narrator: *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Canterbury Tales*', in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 213–26
- Meiss, Millard, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: The Arts, Religion, and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951)
- Messer, William Stuart, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918)
- Miller, Patricia Cox, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)
- Minnis, Alastair J., *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, Chaucer Studies, 8 (Cambridge: Rowman & Littlefield, 1982)
- , *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010)
- , ed., *Chaucer's 'Boece' and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius* (Rochester: Brewer, 1993)
- Minnis, Alastair J., with V. J. Scattergood and Jeremy J. Smith, *The Shorter Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)
- Moore, Robert Ian, 'Heresy as Disease', in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th c.)*, ed. by Willem Lourdaux and Daniël Verhelst, *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia*, 1 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1976), pp. 1–11
- Morse, Ruth, 'Understanding the Man in Black', *Chaucer Review*, 15 (1981), 204–208
- Muscattine, Charles, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957)

- Newman, Francis X., 'St. Augustine's Three Visions and the Structure of the *Commedia*', *Modern Language Notes*, 82 (1967), 56–78
- Nieker, Mark, 'Apprehensive Moments: Conrad, Chaucer, and the *Sefer Yetsira*', *Cithara*, 29 (1989), 48–71
- Nouvet, Claire, 'The "Marguerite": A Distinctive Signature', in *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition*, ed. by R. Barton Palmer, Georgia State Literary Studies, 10 (New York: AMS, 1999), pp. 251–76
- Nutton, Vivian, *Ancient Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- , 'The Reception of Fracastoro's Theory of Contagion: The Seed That Fell among Thorns?', *Osiris*, 6 (1990), 196–234
- , 'The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance', *Medical History*, 27 (1983), 1–34
- Oberhelman, Steven M., 'Galen, *On Diagnosis from Dreams*', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 38 (1983), 36–47
- , 'The Interpretation of Prescriptive Dreams in Ancient Greek Medicine', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 36 (1981), 416–24
- Oerlemans, Onno, 'The Seriousness of the "Nun's Priest's Tale"', *Chaucer Review*, 26 (1992), 317–27
- Olson, Glending, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982)
- Olson, Paul A., 'The Parlement of Foules: Aristotle's *Politics* and the Foundations of Human Society', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 2 (1980), 53–69
- Osborn, Marijane, *Time and the Astrolabe in 'The Canterbury Tales'*, Series for Science and Culture, 5 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002)
- Otten, Charlotte F., 'The Love-Sickness of Troilus', in *Chaucer and the Craft of Fiction*, ed. by Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester: Solaris, 1986), pp. 23–33
- Paley, Karen Surman, '"Al the Revers Seyn of This Sentence": The Enigma of Dream Interpretation in Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale"', *Dreaming*, 4 (1994), 205–12
- Palmer, R. Barton, 'The Book of the Duchess and *Fonteinne Amoureuse*: Chaucer and Machaut Reconsidered', *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 7 (1980), 380–93
- , ed., *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition*, Georgia State Literary Studies, 10 (New York: AMS, 1999)
- Parker, Robert, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983)
- Patterson, Lee, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991)
- , *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1987
- Paxon, James J., 'The Semiotics of Character, Trope, and Troilus: The Figural Construction of the Self and the Discourse of Desire in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Desiring Discourse: The Literature of Love, Ovid through Chaucer*, ed. by James J. Paxson and Cynthia A. Gravlee (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 206–26

- Payne, F. Anne, 'Foreknowledge and Free Will: Three Theories in the "Nun's Priest's Tale"', *Chaucer Review*, 10 (1976), 201–19
- Payne, Robert O., 'Chaucer and the Art of Rhetoric', in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 38–57
- , *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963)
- Peck, Russell A., 'Love, Politics, and Plot in the "Parlement of Foules"', *Chaucer Review*, 24 (1990), 290–305
- Peden, Alison M., 'Macrobius and Medieval Dream Literature', *Medium Ævum*, 54 (1985), 59–73
- Percival, Florence, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 38 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Peters, F. J. J., 'Chaucer's Time in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 60 (1988), 167–70
- Phillips, Helen, 'Structure and Consolation in the "Book of the Duchess"', *Chaucer Review*, 16 (1981), 107–18
- Pizzorno, Patrizia Grimaldi, 'Chauntecleer's Bad Latin', *Exemplaria*, 15 (1994), 387–409
- Pratt, Robert A., 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', *Speculum*, 52 (1977), 538–70
- Quilligan, Maureen, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language: The *Roman de la rose*, the *De planctu naturae*, and the *Parlement of Foules*', in *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol*, ed. by Morton W. Bloomfield, Harvard English Studies, 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 163–86
- Rawcliffe, Carole, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 1995)
- Reed, Thomas L., Jr, *Middle English Debate Poetry and the Aesthetics of Irresolution* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990)
- Robertson, D. W., Jr, 'The Historical Setting of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', in *Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Urban Tigner Holmes, Jr.*, ed. by John Mahoney and John Esten Keller, Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 56 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 169–95
- , *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962)
- Rose, Christine M., 'Reading Chaucer Reading Rape', in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 21–60
- Ross, Valerie A., 'Believing Cassandra: Intertextual Politics and the Interpretation of Dreams in "Troilus and Criseyde"', *Chaucer Review*, 31 (1997), 339–56
- Rowland, Beryl, 'The Physician's "Historical Thyng Notable" and the Man of Law', *English Literary History*, 40 (1973), 165–78
- , ed., *Companion to Chaucer Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)
- Ruggiers, Paul G., 'The Italian Influence on Chaucer', in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. by Beryl Rowland (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 139–61

- , 'Words into Images in Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*: A Third Suggestion', *Modern Language Notes*, 69 (1954), 34–37
- Sanok, Catherine, 'Reading Hagiography: The *Legend of Good Women* and its Feminine Audience', *Exemplaria*, 13 (2001), 323–54
- Scanlon, Larry, 'The Authority of the Fable: Allegory and Irony in the Nun's Priest's Tale', *Exemplaria*, 1 (1989), 43–68
- Schibanoff, Susan, *Chaucer's Queer Poetics: Rereading the Dream Trio*, Chaucer Bibliographies, 8 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006)
- Schless, Howard H., *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Norman: Pilgrim, 1984)
- Schmitt, Jean-Claude, 'The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West', in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. by David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 274–87
- Shoaf, R. A., *Chaucer's Body: The Anxiety of Circulation in the Canterbury Tales* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001)
- Simpson, James, 'Ethics and Interpretation: Reading Wills in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 20 (1998), 73–100
- Simpson, John, and Edmund Weiner, eds, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, 20 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) <<http://www.oed.com>>
- Siraisi, Nancy G., *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)
- Sklute, Larry M., 'The Inconclusive Form of the "Parliament of Fowls"', *Chaucer Review*, 16 (1981), 119–28
- Smalley, Beryl, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)
- Spearing, A. C., 'Al This Mene I Be Love', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, Proceedings 2 (1987), 169–77
- , 'Dream Poems', in *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. by Susanna Fein and David Raybin (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), pp. 159–78
- , *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)
- , *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- St. John, Michael, *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity*, Studies in European Cultural Transition, 7 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)
- Stanbury, Sarah, 'The Lover's Gaze in *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde': 'Subgit to alle Poesye'. Essays in Criticism*, ed. by R. A. Shoaf and Catherine S. Cox, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 104 (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), pp. 224–38
- , 'The Voyeur and the Private Life in *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 13 (1991), 141–58
- Steadman, John M., 'Chauntecleer and Medieval Natural History', *Isis*, 50 (1959), 236–44
- Steinberg, Glenn A., 'Chaucer in the Field of Cultural Production: Humanism, Dante, and "The House of Fame"', *Chaucer Review*, 35 (2000), 182–203
- Stroh, Paul, 'The Allegory of "The Tale of Melibee"', *Chaucer Review*, 2 (1967), 32–42
- , *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989)

- Stroumsa, Guy G., 'Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse', in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. by David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 189–212
- Summit, Jennifer, 'Troilus and Criseyde', in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 213–42
- Talbot, Charles H., 'Medicine', in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David C. Lindberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 391–428
- , *Medicine in Medieval England* (London: Oldbourne, 1967)
- Taylor, Ann M., 'Troilus' Rhetorical Failure (4: 1440–1526)', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 15 (1979), 357–69
- Temkin, Owsei, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973)
- Tester, S. J., *A History of Western Astrology* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990)
- Thomas, Paul R., 'Cato on Chauntecleer: Chaucer's Sophisticated Audience', *Neophilologus*, 72 (1988), 278–83
- , "'Have ye no mannes herte?': Chauntecleer as Cock-Man in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*", in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the 'Canterbury Tales' and 'Troilus and Criseyde'*, ed. by Peter G. Beidler, *Chaucer Studies*, 25 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1998), pp. 187–202
- Thompson, Lou, 'The Narrator as Mourner and Therapist in Chaucer's "Book of the Duchess"', *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 70 (1987), 435–43
- Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923–58)
- Tisdale, Charles, 'The House of Fame: Virgilian Reason and Boethian Wisdom', *Comparative Literature*, 25 (1973), 247–61
- Travis, Peter W., *Disseminal Chaucer: Rereading 'The Nun's Priest's Tale'* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010)
- , 'The *Nun's Priest's Tale* as Grammar-School Primer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 9 (1987), 81–91
- Ullman, Berthold L., *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati*, *Medioevo e Umanesimo*, 4 (Padova: Antenore, 1963)
- Ussery, Huling E., *Chaucer's Physician: Medicine and Literature in Fourteenth-Century England*, *Tulane Studies in English*, 19 (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1971)
- Vance, Eugene, *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986)
- Vaughan, Mícheál, 'Hunting for the Hurt in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *Lingua Humanitatis*, 2 (2002), 85–107
- Wack, Mary Frances, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The 'Viaticum' and its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990)
- , 'Pandaros, Poetry, and Healing', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, Proceedings, 2 (1986), 127–33
- Walde, Christine, 'Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age? Artemidorus, the Greek Interpreter of Dreams', in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History*

- of *Dreaming*, ed. by David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 121–42
- Walker, Dennis, 'Narrative Inconclusiveness and Consolatory Dialectic in the "Book of the Duchess"', *Chaucer Review*, 18 (1983), 1–17
- Warren, Nancy Bradley, "'Olde Stories" and Amazons: The *Legend of Good Women*, the "Knight's Tale", and Fourteenth-Century Political Culture', in *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, ed. by Carolyn P. Collette, *Chaucer Studies*, 36 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 83–104
- Wear, Andrew, 'Fear, Anxiety and the Plague in Early Modern England', in *Religion, Health, and Suffering*, ed. by John R. Hinnells and Roy Porter (London: Kegan Paul, 1999), pp. 339–63
- Wetherbee, Winthrop, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on 'Troilus and Criseyde'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984)
- , *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)
- Wheatley, Edward, 'Commentary Displacing Text: The Nun's Priest's Tale and the Scholastic Fable Tradition', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 18 (1996), 119–41
- Wijsenbeek-Wijler, H., *Aristotle's Concept of Soul, Sleep and Dreams* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1978)
- Wimsatt, James I., 'The Book of the Duchess: Secular Elegy or Religious Vision?', in *Signs and Symbols in Chaucer's Poetry*, ed. by John P. Hermann and John J. Burke (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), pp. 113–29
- , *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Backgrounds of the 'Book of the Duchess'*, *Studies in Comparative Literature*, 43 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968)
- , *The Marguerite Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut*, *Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures*, 87 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970)
- Windeatt, Barry, 'Chaucer and the *Filostrato*', in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 163–83
- Winny, James, *Chaucer's Dream-Poems* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973)
- Wise, Boyd Ashby, *The Influence of Statius upon Chaucer* (Baltimore: Furst, 1911)
- Wood, Chauncey, *Chaucer and the Country of the Stars: Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970)
- , *The Elements of Troilus* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984)
- Woods, Marjorie Curry, 'In a Nutshell: *Verba* and *Sententia* and Matter and Form in Medieval Composition Theory', in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. by Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope B. Doob, and Marjorie Curry Woods (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1992), pp. 19–39
- Ziegler, Joseph, *Medicine and Religion, c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
- Ziolkowski, Jan, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual*, *Speculum Anniversary Monographs*, 10 (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1985)

INDEX

- Aeneas: 54–57, 131–32
Aeneid (Virgil): 54, 57, 67
 Aeschylus: 127
 Affrican: 77, 82–83, 85–88, 99
 Alanus de Insulis: 84, 91–92, 94–95
 Alceste: 135–37, 140–46, 148–49, 151–52
 Alcyone: 28–30, 32, 36, 39, 181
 allegoresis: 92–93, 97
 allegory: 92–93, 97, 102–3, 171
anima: 9, 11
 Anne, Queen: 143–44
 Apollo: 3–4, 16–17, 58, 66–67, 121, 127
 Aristides, Aelius: 4–5, 23
 Aristotle: 8–9, 11, 22, 28, 84, 116, 157, 159
 Asclepiadae: 5
 Asclepius: 2–6, 10, 16–17, 22–23, 48
 astrology: 62–66, 69–70, 124, 162, 174, 176, 182
 audience: 30, 39, 95–98, 104, 119–20, 145, 152, 155, 158, 167, 169, 173, 178, 182, 185
 Augustine: 31, 36, 108, 128, 157, 178
 author: 4, 6–8, 55–56, 66, 71, 96, 105, 139, 143, 150, 152, 169, 185
 authority: 46, 54, 56, 62, 70, 106, 116, 123, 134, 142–43, 146, 159, 164, 169, 178–81
 literary: 54, 157, 164, 167–69, 178–79
 medical: 106, 160–61
 authorship: 2, 47, 91, 143, 151
 Avicenna: 9, 11, 14–16, 22–23, 42, 84, 106, 161
 ballad: 137–38, 140, 142, 149
 birds: 32, 58, 63, 80, 82, 90, 93–94, 97, 124, 134
 Black Death: 18, 22–27, 38, 42, 46, 101, 105–7; *see also* plague
 Blanche: 39, 41, 150; *see also* White
 blindness: 139–40, 143
 Boccaccio: 24, 26–27, 127, 129
 body: 6–12, 15, 28–29, 31–34, 36–37, 41–42, 44, 58–59, 112, 116, 149–50, 158–59, 161, 172, 174
 physical: 7, 16, 18, 28–29, 32–33, 36, 38, 42, 44, 59, 74, 83, 117, 149–51, 158
 social: 22, 48–49, 93
 Boethius: 45–47, 60, 63, 95, 114–15, 178
 brooch: 125, 129–30
 Calkas: 123–24, 126
Canon of Medicine (Avicenna): 14, 23
 Cassandra: 122, 124, 126–29
 Cato: 163–64
 Ceyx and Alcyone: 28, 30, 32, 35, 39, 48, 76
 Chaucer, Geoffrey
 Book of the Duchess: 14, 18, 21–49, 52, 59, 74, 85, 143, 150, 167, 182–84
 The Canterbury Tales: 1, 17, 63–64, 104, 119, 155, 157
 ‘The Franklin’s Tale’: 64–65
 ‘The General Prologue’: 1, 16, 63, 148
 ‘The Knight’s Tale’: 173
 ‘The Manciple’s Tale’: 16, 23
 ‘The Monk’s Tale’: 155–56, 179

- 'The Nun's Priest's Tale': 17, 19, 64,
 155–82, 183–84
 'The Pardoner's Tale': 26, 64, 68
 'The Physician's Tale': 64, 117
 'The Second Nun's Tale': 166
House of Fame: 14, 17–19, 49, 51–72, 85,
 94, 122, 164, 172, 174, 182–83
Legend of Good Women: 14, 17, 19, 57, 97,
 111, 130, 131–53, 184
Parliament of Fowls: 14, 18–19, 72,
 73–99, 164, 171–72, 182–83
Romance of the Rose: 138
Troilus and Criseyde: 16, 19, 46, 71, 82,
 97, 101–30, 136, 138, 171–72,
 182–84
 Chauntecleer: 127, 157–58, 160, 162–74,
 176, 178–79, 181–82
 Christ: 13, 15, 28, 58, 68, 149, 151
 Christianity: 13, 32, 36–38, 81, 89, 147
 Cicero: 11, 19, 52, 76, 82, 84, 113
 consolation: 21, 30, 45, 47–49, 60, 95, 114
 contagion: 101–2, 104, 107–9, 111–14
 Criseyde: 19, 46, 71, 97, 101–3, 105–15,
 117–27, 129–30, 136, 138, 163,
 171–72, 182–84
 Cupid: 59, 88–89, 142
 cure: 45–49, 56–57, 90, 94–95, 97–98,
 101–3, 105–7, 109, 111, 113–15, 129,
 131–32, 143, 160, 182–83
 power to: 45, 111, 131–33, 182
 Curry, Walter Clyde: 31, 83, 128,
 160–62, 174
 Cytherea: 85–86, 91

 daisies: 134–35, 139–40, 148–49, 151–52
 Dante: 19, 61–62, 87, 103, 177
 daughters: 121, 123–24, 127, 181
 death: 23, 27, 32–33, 38, 41–42, 46, 57,
 59, 86–87, 108, 110–11, 148, 151,
 167–68, 171–72
 defamation: 51, 55–57, 60, 71, 183
 Dido: 54–57, 70, 131–33, 137, 151
 Diomedes: 103, 117, 123, 128–30
 disease: 2, 6, 8–9, 16, 18–19, 25–28, 43,
 71–72, 88–90, 92–93, 95–96, 101–10,
 112–16, 119–20, 130
 Chauntecleer: 160
 contagion-based model of: 101, 108
 Criseyde: 112
 diagnosis of: 9, 32, 42, 159–61, 183
 of language: 92, 119
 transmission of: 108–9, 117
 Troilus: 104, 110
 see also illness
 divination: 8–9, 11, 13, 36–37, 65, 122–23,
 161, 174
 doubleness: 54, 56, 78–79, 86–87, 103,
 134, 138, 140
Dream of Scipio (Cicero): 12–13, 37, 77,
 87, 162; see also *Somnium Scipionis*
 dream-poem: 18, 34–35, 38, 46–49, 51, 55,
 58–59, 63–64, 67, 70, 137, 146, 169,
 183; see also dream-vision
 dream theory: 12, 22, 84, 166
 dream-vision: 19, 22, 45–47, 184;
 see also dream-poem
 dreaming: 7, 11–14, 19, 22, 28, 31–32, 34,
 37–40, 53, 76, 79, 84–85, 89–90, 95,
 99, 123
 dreams: 1–14, 16–19, 21–23, 28–44, 46–49,
 51–57, 66–67, 69–72, 82–86, 92–94,
 97–99, 121–31, 135–37, 157–79, 181–85
 Alcyone: 29–30
 Asclepian: 47–48
 boar: 126–28
 Chauntecleer: 159–60, 162–63, 168,
 171, 173–74, 181
 classification of: 12–13, 162
 Criseyde: 117, 125
 dismissal of: 122, 167
 divination: 13, 123, 162, 172
 eagle: 110, 125
 false: 33, 67, 87
 form of: 70, 97, 146
 Geoffrey: 52
 incubation: 2–3
 individual: 18, 22, 29–30, 32, 34, 39, 54, 85
 interpretation of: 7, 9–11, 35–37, 159,
 161, 163, 174, 182
 Joseph: 35
 narrator: 23, 27–29, 32, 34, 37, 39–40,
 42, 44, 48, 78–79, 83, 85, 93, 96, 134
 Pandarus: 124
 prophetic: 7, 11, 171
 Scipio: 13, 61, 76, 78, 82, 93
 significative: 161, 172
 Troilus: 122, 127–28, 163
 types of: 12, 17, 52

- eagle: 58–64, 66, 68, 117, 125
 epidemics: 6, 16, 23–24, 26, 38, 106–7
 eyes: 31, 41, 65, 68, 108, 119, 126, 132, 135, 139, 170, 176; *see also* sight
- fables: 171, 179, 181–82
 fame: 14, 17–19, 49, 51–52, 54–72, 77, 85, 94, 111, 119, 122, 164, 172, 174, 182–83
 fathers: 3, 24, 46, 123–24, 179
 flattery: 181–82
 foreknowledge: 177–78
 foxes: 157, 164, 168, 172–74, 176–77, 179–82
 free will: 38, 47, 178, 180–81
 Friedman, John B.: 21, 25–26, 48, 108
- Galen: 9–10, 15–17, 22–23, 42–43, 101, 105–6, 159, 161
 gardens: 78, 86, 88–90, 95, 97, 110, 124–25
 gates: 67, 79, 86–89, 94
 gender: 22, 57, 102, 129, 132, 142, 165–66
Genesis: 31, 35–36, 128
 God: 9, 11, 13, 15, 35–36, 38, 51–52, 59, 64, 78, 80, 158–59, 165, 169, 177–78
 god of medicine: 2, 6
 gods: 4–5, 122, 124
 gold: 58, 62, 83, 131, 135
 Greeks: 3–4, 6, 11, 14–15, 32, 71, 113, 116, 123, 130, 156
 guides: 46–47, 66, 68, 79, 99, 145
- hagiography: 145–47
 harmony: 18, 75, 79, 82, 94–95, 184
 healing: 4, 18–19, 22–23, 43–45, 47–49, 59–61, 65–68, 86, 90–91, 99, 120–22, 130–33, 135–40, 145–48, 150–52
 agents: 47–49
 antidotes: 49, 53, 64, 92, 155, 182
 Criseyde: 111
 herbs: 2, 15, 17, 21, 48, 55, 76, 88–89, 102, 106, 110, 121, 161–63
 media: 18, 49
 powers: 4, 42–43
 process of: 44, 63
 source of: 44, 104, 110
 tools of: 85, 147
 Troilus: 114
 health: 4, 6–7, 15, 18, 22, 31, 33–34, 43, 53, 72, 75, 85, 87, 89, 110–11
 regimens: 6–8, 115
- heart: 41–45, 64, 82, 86–87, 108, 112, 117, 125, 134–36, 165
 Hippocrates: 3–5, 7, 15–17, 22–23, 42, 73, 97, 99, 103, 105–6, 161
 history: 5, 51, 54–55, 63, 66–67, 85, 107, 127–28, 142, 157, 162, 171, 176, 180–82
A History of Medicine (Castiglioni): 15, 26, 107, 156
 Holcot, Robert: 161, 163, 172
 husbands: 28–30, 158, 161, 165–66
- illness: 2, 5–6, 16, 22, 42, 44, 52–53, 65, 74–75, 84, 88, 92, 111–12, 122, 174; *see also* disease
 illusion: 32–33, 64, 162
 images: 36, 39–40, 54–55, 57–58, 65–67, 69, 79, 93, 149–50, 159, 172
 imagination: 31, 39–40, 45, 49, 62, 66, 70, 176–77, 183
 insomnia: 27–28, 32, 48, 76, 110
 interpretation: 11–12, 31, 34–36, 39, 94–97, 121–22, 124–25, 127–30, 136–37, 144–46, 158–59, 161–72, 174, 176–78, 181–83
 Isidore of Seville: 3–4, 6, 58, 101, 127
 Italy: 80, 101, 107, 147
- Joseph: 13, 35–38, 168
- knowledge: 11, 30, 35, 40, 51–52, 54, 62, 64, 70–71, 75, 77, 89, 159, 176, 179
 Kruger, Steven: 11–14, 22, 34, 40, 53, 62, 66, 79, 89, 123, 178
- Lady Nature: 91–92, 94–95
 language: 29, 39–41, 43–45, 47, 49, 90–97, 101–2, 104, 113–14, 117, 130, 145, 155–58, 170–71, 181–84
 Chauntecleer's misuse of: 170
 persuasive: 115, 117–18
 laughter: 119, 145–46
 laws: 92, 103, 107, 115–17, 145
 letters: 2, 19, 31, 104, 109, 113–14, 117, 122–23, 125, 130–31, 143–44, 168, 184
 love: 43–47, 57, 73–78, 80, 82–83, 85–95, 97, 102–3, 108–9, 111–13, 119–21, 131–32, 135–46, 148–49, 165–66

- absence of: 46, 75, 78
 courtly: 56–57, 93–94, 111, 113, 132,
 150, 157, 165, 178
 sexual: 94, 135
 spiritual: 76–77, 149
 see also lovesickness
 love poetry: 57, 90, 93–94, 138, 150
 love visions: 45, 47
 lovesickness: 16, 45–46, 56, 60, 77,
 86–87, 90, 102, 104–5, 108–11,
 115, 128–32, 182
 cure for: 110, 129, 132
 Troilus: 19, 105, 113, 122
 Lynch, Kathryn: 30, 33, 45, 91, 99, 139

 Machaut, Guillaume de: 24–25, 30, 45–47,
 70, 81, 90–91, 98, 108, 134–35, 138,
 143–44, 151
 Macrobius: 12–13, 22, 35–38, 52, 76, 82,
 84, 87, 162, 168
 man in black: 21, 39, 42–44, 49
 marguerite tradition: 134–35, 143–44, 151
 martyrs: 147, 151
 medicine: 1–7, 9–19, 21–24, 26, 51–52,
 62–67, 70–78, 81–86, 101–7, 114–17,
 156–57, 161–62, 174, 176–78, 181–84
 art of: 4, 121
 astrological: 63–64, 66, 174
 diagnosis: 7, 10, 15, 18, 22–23, 38, 56,
 105, 158–59, 162
 doctors: 63, 115–16, 122, 129;
 see also physicians
 exercise: 7, 15, 66, 144, 156, 172
 Hippocratic: 5, 7
 humoural: 53, 105, 110, 113
 humoural theory: 6, 14, 105–6, 108, 111
 humours: 6, 14, 31, 81, 105, 122, 160,
 162, 181
 bile: 6, 10, 14, 105
 blood: 6, 10, 41, 103, 105
 phlegm: 6, 14, 105, 161
 medieval: 16–17, 156
 physicians: 2, 4–7, 9–10, 15, 17, 23,
 25–26, 28, 63–66, 73, 84, 114–17,
 159–60, 177, 184; *see also* doctors
 schools of: 14–15
 texts: 17, 22–23
Medicine in Medieval England
 (Talbot): 16–17, 156

Medieval Dream-Poetry (Spearing): 28, 31,
 46, 90, 94, 183
 medieval England: 3, 16–17, 56, 103, 156
 miasma: 109
 mind: 8–9, 28, 31, 33–34, 36, 40, 58, 83,
 88, 91, 116, 161, 163, 166
 misinterpretation: 35, 96–97, 119, 145,
 167, 172
 mistranslation: 170
 Morpheus: 28–29, 40
 murder: 120, 132, 150, 152, 167–68
 music: 66–67, 81–82

 nature: 10, 14, 22, 31–32, 45–46, 54, 58,
 66, 68, 78–79, 84, 89, 91–96, 98–99,
 115–16
 numerology: 81–82
 Nutton, Vivian: 101, 105

 Oberhelman, Steven: 10, 159–60
Oneirocritica (Artemidorus): 11
 Ovid: 28–30, 32, 34, 43, 57, 69, 71, 76,
 88, 90, 115, 121

 pagan: 36, 40, 58, 68
 Pandarus: 102, 104, 108–15, 117–26, 130
 paradox: 19, 133–34, 137–39, 143, 146–47,
 151, 184
 patrons: 18, 133, 143–44, 146, 150, 152–53
 Pertelote: 158–70, 172–73, 178, 182
 Philomela: 124–25, 151
 philosophy: 6, 11, 45–46, 60–61, 63–64,
 71, 91, 95, 114, 157, 176, 178, 182
 natural: 53, 60, 62, 65, 68, 70
 plague: 16, 18, 23–27, 38, 49, 90, 105–8,
 165; *see also* Black Death
 Plato: 5, 11, 36, 115–16
 prayer: 15, 29, 51–53, 158
 Procne: 124–25
 profit, common: 92–94
 prophecy: 3–4, 7, 9, 12, 29, 32, 34–38, 47, 49,
 63, 66, 101, 121–27, 129–30, 176–77
 prophets: 35–36, 128
 Prudence: 125–26
 punishment: 91, 138–40, 144

 reason: 29, 38, 44–47, 110, 116, 119, 139
 recreation: 24, 42, 61, 67, 95, 98, 145
 relics: 15, 147–49, 152

- religion: 4, 6, 58, 70, 143, 146–47, 177
 remedies: 8, 51, 54, 75–76, 86, 89–91,
 96, 106, 116, 126–27, 129, 166–67,
 170–71, 182, 184
 representation: 42, 69, 89, 131–32, 156,
 183–84
 reputation: 55–56, 118–19, 136–37, 140
 resurrection: 29, 33, 36, 39–41, 49, 58,
 148–51
 Rhazes: 15–16, 22
 rhetoric: 58, 92, 112–13, 115, 117–21,
 149, 157, 162, 172, 176, 178–80
 romance: 45, 56, 84, 90, 97, 136–38

Sacred Tales: 4–5, 23
 sacrifice: 140, 150–52
 sainthood: 151
 saints: 15, 30, 89, 147, 151
 science: 9–10, 63, 71, 76, 84, 101, 106, 115,
 117, 156, 159, 169
 Scipio: 12–13, 37, 61, 77, 82, 87, 162
 sight: 69, 135, 139–40, 143; *see also* eyes
 Siraisi, Nancy: 14, 16, 63
 sleep: 2, 6–9, 11–12, 21, 27–29, 32, 53, 59,
 67, 70, 110, 163, 167
Somnium Scipionis: 61, 81–83, 85, 92;
 see also *Dream of Scipio*
 sorrow: 33, 40–44, 47, 86, 121, 123
 soul: 6–9, 11, 15, 33, 59, 61, 69, 76, 79, 87,
 115–16, 124, 183
 Spearing, A. C.: 28, 31, 46, 77, 80, 90, 94,
 119–20, 146, 183
 speech: 2, 19, 44, 47–48, 90, 92, 96, 115,
 120, 124, 171, 181–82
 sun: 7, 33, 58, 62, 135, 139, 174

 temple: 5, 54, 56, 58, 88
 Tertullian: 11
 tradition: 30, 75, 84–85, 134, 139, 143,
 145, 176–77
 tragedy: 166–67, 180, 182
 transformation: 22, 34, 49, 51, 57, 70
translatio studii: 54, 58, 60, 67, 69
 translation: 4, 11, 14, 22–23, 54, 57–58, 60,
 66, 138, 145, 156, 159, 164, 170, 176
 Troilus: 19, 46, 71, 101–15, 117–30,
 136–38, 143, 157, 163, 171–72,
 181–84
 Troy: 2, 54, 103–5, 108, 113, 122–23, 125,
 128, 137
 truth: 33–37, 49, 69, 75, 77, 84, 98, 123,
 127, 129–30, 138–39, 164, 174, 181

 Venus: 59, 66, 79, 85, 91–92, 174
 Vincent of Beauvais: 17, 159, 173
 Virgil: 32, 46, 56–57, 61–62, 67, 87
 visions: 2, 11, 13–14, 30–31, 33, 35, 39–40,
 47, 53, 61, 67, 70, 77, 84, 108
 voyeur: 119–20

 Wack, Mary: 16, 77, 90, 102, 105, 110–11,
 114–15, 129
 Wheatley, Edward: 168–69, 171
 whelp: 21, 48
 White: 36, 39–46, 49; *see also* Blanche
 women: 17, 39, 54, 111, 125, 131–32,
 136–37, 139–40, 142, 145–46,
 150–52, 165–66, 169
 wounds: 2, 78, 89, 114, 155, 157

CURSOR MUNDI

All volumes in this series are evaluated by an Editorial Board, strictly on academic grounds, based on reports prepared by referees who have been commissioned by virtue of their specialism in the appropriate field. The Board ensures that the screening is done independently and without conflicts of interest. The definitive texts supplied by authors are also subject to review by the Board before being approved for publication. Further, the volumes are copyedited to conform to the publisher's stylebook and to the best international academic standards in the field.

Titles in Series

Chris Jones, *Eclipse of Empire? Perceptions of the Western Empire and its Rulers in Late-Medieval France* (2007)

Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (2008)

Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe, ed. by Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (2008)

William G. Walker, *'Paradise Lost' and Republican Tradition from Aristotle to Machiavelli* (2009)

Carmela Vircillo Franklin, *Material Restoration: A Fragment from Eleventh-Century Echternach in a Nineteenth-Century Parisian Codex* (2010)

Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c.1000–1200), ed. by Haki Antonsson and Ildar Garipzanov (2010)

Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai, ed. by Sharon E. J. Gerstel and Robert S. Nelson (2011)

'This Earthly Stage': World and Stage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England, ed. by Brett D. Hirsch and Christopher Wortham (2011)

Alan J. Fletcher, *The Presence of Medieval English Literature: Studies at the Interface of History, Author, and Text in a Selection of Middle English Literary Landmarks* (2012)

Vehicles of Transmission, Translation, and Transformation in Medieval Textual Culture, ed. by Robert Wisnovsky, Faith Wallis, Jamie C. Fumo, and Carlos Fraenkel (2012)

Claudio Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus: The Intermingling of Hermetic Piety and Christian Thought* (2012)

The Faces of the Other: Religious Rivalry and Ethnic Encounters in the Later Roman World, ed. by Maijastina Kahlos (2012)

Barbara Furlotti, *A Renaissance Baron and his Possessions: Paolo Giordano I Orsini, Duke of Bracciano (1541–1585)* (2012)

Rethinking Virtue, Reforming Society: New Directions in Renaissance Ethics, c.1350 – c.1650, ed. by David A. Lines and Sabrina Ebbesmeyer (2013)

Luigi Andrea Berto, *The Political and Social Vocabulary of John the Deacon's 'Istoria Veneticorum'* (2013)

Writing Down the Myths, ed. by Joseph Falaky Nagy (2013)

Charles Russell Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher-King: A Literary History of Alexander the Great in Medieval and Early Modern England* (2013)

Wendy J. Turner, *Care and Custody of the Mentally Ill, Incompetent, and Disabled in Medieval England* (2013)

Viking Archaeology in Iceland: Mosfell Archaeological Project, ed. by Davide Zori and Jesse Byock (2014)

